



## Firebird 24

Reborn From Our Ashes

### NTEU Chapter 24 Newsletter

Volume 16

\*\*\* Member Edition \*\*\*

January 2009

#### President's Corner

-Jeri Burger



Happy New Year! NTEU is certainly looking forward to 2009 and a new attitude towards federal employees. The last 8 years have been a struggle, but NTEU has persevered and had many accomplishments. Chapter 24 has also witnessed an increase in grievances and other actions over the last several years. I don't believe the Agency is willing to informally work out problems. Most issues need to be grieved and many need to be arbitrated before the employee is afforded the proper relief.

National NTEU has already participated with the Presidential Transition Team. The recommendations include:

- Re-establishing labor-management partnerships government-wide
- Ending the privatization of tax collections
- Keeping health care costs down, through means such as larger government contributions toward health care premiums, applying for Medicare subsidies, extending coverage for dependents after

age 22, and covering domestic partners.

- Amending Section 1203 to allow for appropriate penalties other than mandatory termination.

Members can access more information about NTEU's recommendations on the NTEU web site, [www.nteu.org](http://www.nteu.org). The information can be found on the home page. Click on "**Read NTEU's recommendations to the transition team.**"

A special thank you to Chapter Legislative Coordinator **Susan Doolittle** and Vice President **Dan Itchue** for their time and effort in helping to elect NTEU endorsed candidates in Michigan. Thanks to **Karen Johnson** and **Henry Morrison**, as well as Susan and Dan, for volunteering a Saturday to make "Get Out to Vote" phone calls to NTEU members.

On another potentially positive note, IRS **Commission Shulman** has established the Workforce of Tomorrow. The task force's goal is to **make the IRS the best place to work in government, and ensure that five years from now we have the leadership and workforce ready for the next 15 years.** The IRS has titled six teams for the Workforce of Tomorrow:

- Valuing and retaining our people
- Planning a dynamic people strategy
- Attracting the best
- Streamline hiring
- Growing future leaders
- Enhancing the role of managers

The task force is made up of management officials and some FLRP (Front Line Readiness Program) participants. The Commissioner asked

that NTEU be involved as well. National President **Colleen Kelley** agreed that NTEU would and should be involved. She wrote "When Commissioner Shulman asked NTEU to work with the IRS on this initiative, I agreed. As the representative for all bargaining unit employees in the IRS, this is a conversation and project we want to be involved in, I do not believe you can talk about the workforce of tomorrow without focusing on the workforce of today."

NTEU's participation consists of an advisory board, headed by Colleen Kelley and seven chapter presidents. I was selected to be on the board and have participated on several conference calls and attended focus group and team meetings. I am impressed by the team's enthusiasm and ideas that they have already developed. On a more negative note, I was one of the chapter presidents at the term bargaining table for the new IRS – NTEU National Agreement the week of December 1, 2008. The bargaining team is led by Executive Vice President Frank Ferris and Deputy Director of Negotiations Ken Moffett. There are four chapter presidents permanently assigned to the team and three chapter presidents rotate on a weekly basis, as I did.

I wrote "on a more negative note" because the two sides appear to be very far apart at this point. We discussed 22 articles the week of December 1. Many of the discussions were initial presentations of either the Agency's or NTEU's proposals. It was very clear to me that the Agency wants to take back many of the rights and privileges that Employees have under the current contract, while NTEU wants to expand those rights and privileges. I am very confident that the Bargaining Team will vigilantly continue to fight for you! Members can review the current contract proposals at [www.nteu.org](http://www.nteu.org). After you log in, click on "Members Only" on the side menu bar. Then click on "Side by Side Contract Proposals" under the IRS header. Please forward any comments, concerns or questions to your steward and I will get them to the bargaining team.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge some recent steward changes in Chapter 24. Steward **Ella Pride-Porter** retired from the Internal Revenue Service in November 2008. Ella was a Chapter 24 steward since 1989. We will miss her wisdom, her ability to work out problems informally, and her willingness to help! Congratulations on your well deserved retirement Ella! Revenue Officer **Wendy Molloy** volunteered to replace Ella as one of the stewards in Farmington Hills. Thank you Wendy! When Karen Johnson was appointed Chief Steward in 2007, **Donna Jones**

volunteered to temporarily cover as the steward in Clinton Township. She has finally been relieved by **Michelle Gray**. Michelle is a Revenue Officer in Clinton Township. Thank you Donna and welcome Michelle. Thank you for volunteering! **Zondra Rhim** was the steward in MITS since 1995. She was also an executive board member for several terms. Zondra received a promotion that moved her into Chapter 78's bargaining unit. Congratulations Zondra on your promotion that sadly took you away from Chapter 24! **Linda Anderson** has agreed to become the new steward in MITS. Thank you Linda! Steward **Jeannine Barrera** has decided to work part time so has resigned as the Wage and Investment steward in Saginaw. Jeannine has had a long history of stewardship; she has been a steward for 14 years! Thank you Ella, Donna, Zondra, and Jeannine for your service to the members and the chapter. Welcome Wendy, Michelle and Linda to the Chapter 24 steward family.

## Hails from the Chief

-Karen Johnson, Chief Steward  
& Board Member



Happy New Year to All. 2009 is shaping up to be one of continuing challenges for our members and our chapter office.

One of the highlights of 2008 was our National President, **Colleen Kelley's** visit on October 22. Colleen spoke at a Lunch and Learn held at the ECC during the afternoon, and then addressed the members who attended the general membership meeting at Sinbad's Restaurant. I want to extend special thanks to the ACS stewards, **Patricia Buchanan, Rhonda Davis, Acqueese King, Brenda Lowery, and Larry Reynolds**, who coordinated the event. I don't think people realize how much planning and preparation goes into these festivities. Special thanks also to the stewards who assisted in the set up at Sinbad's.

Our chapter continues to wrestle with an all time high 73 grievances and other issues. 31% of these issues arise out of ACS, where management continues their pursuit of unfair treatment of call site employees; particularly when it comes to time and attendance issues.

Last year, Chapter 24 stewards closed 85 grievances with an 88.5% success rate in obtaining full or partial relief. We are committed to providing the best representation we can to all our members, but we can't do it without you. If you are called to TIGTA for an interview, call your steward immediately. If you are presented with a letter proposing disciplinary action, or worse, proposed termination, call your steward. If you receive an annual performance appraisal that you feel is incorrect, call your steward.

The National Agreement is currently under renegotiation, but employee rights under the old agreement are still protected, no matter what some misinformed management official may try to persuade you to believe. If you think your rights under the collective bargaining agreement are being trampled upon, please consult with your steward.

Chapter 24 said a fond farewell to Steward **Ella Porter**, who retired at the end of November. Ella has been an integral part of Chapter 24 for a number of years. She brought her best to every situation, using her skill in resolving conflicts before they developed into real problems. She was always willing to lend a hand in working to solve any problem no matter how big or small. Ella was my coach in 1981 when I was selected as a revenue officer, so my heart is especially heavy even though I am so happy for her.

Kudos to the following stewards for their exceptional representational work:

**Jesse Dawkins, David Hauenstein, Henry Morrison, Dan Itchue, Rhonda Davis, Dave King, Catharine Kelley, Brenda Lowery, Acqueese King, Linda Anderson, Leonard Hanline, Greg Wert, Scott Whitehead**, and my assistant chief steward for outstate, **Mary Cook**.

#### **Term Bargaining On a New Contract Between IRS and NTEU**



**-Dan Itchue, Chapter Vice-President**

I attended NTEU National Leadership training the week of October 13, 2008.

One of the main issues of discussion was that NTEU and IRS had finally agreed to the ground rules and bargaining would begin on a new contract. In March 2005 the IRS announced that it

would not agree to the same ground rules that had been used for the past 30 years. IRS refused to agree with using private mediators/ arbitrators to settle contract disputes. I wanted to share with you some of the Articles of the National Agreement that IRS wants reopened and what they want from us.

A bit of general information might be helpful, first. There are approximately 82,000 bargaining unit employees at the IRS of which 54,000 people are union members. That translates to a National membership rate of about 66%. Chapter 24 has a membership rate of 76%. Were that rate higher, our voice would be that much stronger.

The most important Articles and procedures that IRS wants to change, and the negative impact that it would have on employees, are;

- Article 13, Promotions/Other competitive actions: The IRS wants to eliminate the Best Qualified ranking process, replacing it with a promotion authority from a list of all people that meet the minimum qualifications for a job opening regardless of CJE score, time on the job, experience, qualifications, etc. Furthermore, there would be NO system for grievances for employees to challenge the selection made.
- Article 8, Union rights: The IRS wants to restrict the definition of official meetings (known as 7114 meetings), thereby reducing our opportunity to discuss issues as members and stewards. They also want to eliminate our right to discuss the content of 7114 meetings by denying us our 30 minutes at the end of these meetings. Finally, they want to reduce our right to speak to new hires during their orientation from 30 minutes to 10 minutes. Historically, Supreme Court decisions have given NTEU the right to ask questions and make statements on issues that impact union members. I think their strategy is to reduce or eliminate NTEU's ability to communicate with current and prospective members in the hope of keeping our membership down.
- Article 19, Reduction in Force and Mitigation Strategies. The IRS has proposed that management have the right to determine what job units and job series be subject to RIF based upon their interpretation of critical budget shortfalls without having to justify the circumstances of the RIF. This is exactly

opposite of the current procedures where potential RIFs go through a mitigation process that NTEU is actively involved in. I don't believe it is a good idea to give some nameless executives in Washington a free pass to RIF any business unit or job series without having NTEU involved to protect employees from unfair or unwarranted threats to their livelihood.

- Article 12, Performance Appraisal System: The IRS wants to eliminate the requirement to counsel an employee before lowering their annual appraisal CJE scores. Why? In my opinion it is so they can target individual employees for removal without any hurdles to jump over. The current practice is to give an employee specific, meaningful counseling prior to lowering their appraisal (generally a mid-year review); as a result, the employee has the opportunity to improve their performance to fully successful before the annual appraisal date.

This list is certainly not all that the IRS wants to take away from us or give to themselves, but space in the newsletter is limited. I want you to know what our national bargaining team is facing. Even with a more "union" friendly administration taking over, IRS executives have begun to assault the rights that have been fought for and won the last 3 decades. You should know your NTEU bargaining team will work very hard to be successful on our behalf. Our Chapter President, Jeri Burger, was selected to be a bargaining team member for these negotiations. Please wish her well and give her all of your support.

### **Chapter 7 & Chapter 13 Are More Than Parts of a Romance Novel**

**-Mary Cook, Assistant Chief Steward**

Difficult financial times are not just something we see on TV; they affect many of us here at the IRS, as well. Everyone's circumstances are different, and some of our NTEU members are deeply impacted by family job losses and plummeting stock values. I have been asked by members about bankruptcy: "Can I file bankruptcy and still retain my job? Could it have an impact on my career?"

The Internal Revenue Service has an official position about employee indebtedness:

§216.6 of the *Internal Revenue Service Rules of Conduct* states: "Employees are expected to

manage their private financial affairs and handle personal debts and obligations in a manner which will not cause embarrassment to the Service. Employees are expected to meet all just financial obligations (i.e., those acknowledged by the employee or reduced to judgment by a court), especially those imposed by law, such as Federal, State, and local taxes."

Indebtedness is not specifically addressed in the NTEU/IRS contract. It is addressed in the *Internal Revenue Service Guide to Penalty Determinations*. The penalties in this guide are graduated and the punishment for a first offense is not as severe as a third offense. For "Failing to manage or honor private financial affairs where operations or reputations are affected", penalties range from admonishment for a first offense to removal for a third offense. For "Failing to satisfy in good faith, just financial obligations", the penalties range from a written reprimand for a first offense to removal for a third offense.

So what will happen to you if you file bankruptcy? Each situation must be addressed individually, based upon the unique circumstances involved.

The Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act of 2005 makes the qualification for Chapter 7 bankruptcy (liquidation and debt dismissal) more stringent and includes new requirements for people who consider taking this avenue. Chapter 13 bankruptcy is a debt repayment plan approved by the court.

If you are unable to renegotiate with your creditors, bankruptcy may be a viable choice. Bankruptcy affects your credit score, and has possible job implications, so consider the option carefully before making your decision.



He's Back!

### **And Your Little Dog, Too!**

We've all grown accustomed to IRS management expecting employees to perform super-human feats, like report to an office when the rest of the city is shut down. Maybe it's because they assume that fewer cars on snow clogged roads make your effort *easier*? Of course the reality is that everyone's situation is a little different. The last snow day, Friday, December 19, illustrated the IRS bizarro-world in a typical fashion: while a group manager was cozy warm

at home flexing, her subordinate, with no laptop or ability to flex, couldn't get out of her driveway. The employee called the office a couple times, speaking with another employee who managed to get to work, but neglected to leave a precise message on voicemail. While the manager could have approved the leave when everyone returned to work on Monday, an AWOL slip was issued for not having pre-approved leave. Of course a grievance was filed. Now, however, aside from showing a total lack of compassion or commonsense, it's outrageous the hours spent addressing this issue could have been more productively used, like doing some actual work. So this manager deserves not only a Grinch award but a Scarecrow ("If I only had a brain") award for using a snow-day to attempt humiliation of our fellow member.



## Chapter 24 Slaps Leather and Rides out West

**-Mary Cook, Assistant Chief Steward**

On November 13, 2008, NTEU Chapter 24 held a general membership meeting in Grand Rapids for our outstate members. 35 people attended. In addition to the Board of Directors, members came from Benton Harbor, Kalamazoo, East Lansing, Jackson, and of course, Grand Rapids. President **Jeri Burger** and Chief Steward **Karen Johnson** brought the group up to date on the NTEU's current activities. Member **Ken Tomlin** of East Lansing won the 50/50 raffle. Some of the other lucky prize drawing winners were: **Carol Lamb, Fran Ulchar, and Karen Young**. A delicious buffet dinner and cookies for dessert rounded out the meeting. Why don't **YOU** come to the next membership meeting? We would love to see **YOU**. NTEU Chapter 24 hosts 3 membership meetings each year. We hope **YOU** come to the next one.

### Hats Off to Larry

**-Jeri Burger, Chapter President**

Revenue Officer Larry Baugh retired from the Internal Revenue Service in December 2008. Larry was also a NTEU leader for 21 years. He

served as a steward, Legislative Coordinator, Vice President, President, and Chief Steward of Chapter 24. Larry leaves us with a legacy of hard work, dedication, and caring for the members of Chapter 24.

A luncheon and open house was held at the Clinton Township office in Larry's honor on January 7. Group Manager Frank Poma presented Larry with congratulatory letters from Senator Debbie Stabenaw, President and Mrs. Bush, a 30 year plaque and the Gallatin award. NTEU National President Colleen Kelley sent Larry a plaque that contained her personal thank you for his esteemed service as a NTEU leader as well as her best wishes. Chapter 24 gave Larry an engraved mantle clock to commemorate his retirement. Congratulations Larry, and best wishes for a wonderful retirement!

## Labor Recognition Week Luncheon

**-Janice T Williams-Littlejohn, Steward**



Members from the east side of the 21<sup>st</sup> floor of the McNamara Building, as well as some employees from the ECC who are members of Chapter 24, were treated to lunch on September 24<sup>th</sup>, as part of Labor Recognition Week. The menu included honey roasted turkey with fixings for a sandwich, chips and a variety of juices. The early morning treats included donuts, bagels, and cinnamon rolls. The event was hosted by Chapter Vice President **Dan Itchue**, former Steward and Board Member **Zondra Rhim**, new Steward **Linda Anderson**, and me.

## What if there was no NTEU?

**-Greg Wert**

Imagine there were no NTEU, no National Agreement, and no bargaining rights. If that seems simplistic, let's consider the employment scenario of the employees with the fewest rights: non-bargaining unit and probationary employees. In our scenario, an employee is having difficulties during the first four months of a new position (probationary NBU). The employee has

made some minor nit-picking type errors and was told by the manager of the need to improve or move out. The employee has decided that this position was not a good fit and wanted to move elsewhere in the agency. Unfortunately, if the manager decides that since the employee could not do these minor duties there was no other job worth pursuing, so the manager asks the person to resign.

Under the agency's rules, sufficient notice to improve is supposed to be given to the employee along with assistance in finding a more suitable position. If the first requirement becomes an impossible task (once the decision is locked-in) then the second never really has a chance to happen. Managers may even perceive limitations on their ability to assist the employee.

Since this person was NBU, there are no NTEU contract rights, such as the filing of grievances. Appeal to MSPB is possible, but during a probationary period the basis for appeal are limited to marital status or partisan political discrimination. "Agency grievance" procedures are virtually unavailable.

The sad reality is that "employment at will" would mean that you could be fired at any time for any reason, except for a few illegal reasons. That's what life as a probationary employee is like.

Many BU members gladly accept the protections of our negotiated labor contract, and some choose not to contribute to the cost of this protection, and they are sometimes referred to as "free riders." This sounds like the best of both worlds since NTEU has a legal duty of fair representation, with certain limitations that do not extend to arbitrating a case. However, under the outgoing Administration, Management has been less likely to settle issues, forcing NTEU to arbitrate more cases, so this would seem to me a risky strategy for any "free rider." Therefore, for maximum protection membership in NTEU is a necessity.

#### **Retirement Corner\***

##### **-Victor Jackson & Phyllis Vidler**

Yes. It's time to turn in your paperwork. Without such, you will never retire. The Form 2801 and Form 3107 are the retirement paperwork. These forms are the basis for Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the agency to calculate your annuity amount, and continue health and life insurance into retirement.

Since there are two pension systems, you must specify which plan applies to you:

- CSRS-Civil Service Retirement System (Form 2801)
- FERS-Federal Employees Retirement System (Form 3107)

Both forms, at first glance, seem long and complicated, but they are not. The first several pages of the package are instructions. Sections A, B, and C are self-explanatory and quick to complete.

Section D-The Annuity section: The election of spousal survivor benefit is a critical decision that you must make with your spouse. If you are married and you choose to elect anything less than the maximum survivor annuity, then you must complete SF 2801-2, or SF 3107-2. They both require your spouse's signature and must be notarized. The reduced survivor annuity amounts are different for FERS and CSRS. If you have a former spouse from whom you were divorced on or after May 7, 1985, and a court order gives a survivor annuity, then you must attach all court documents to your SF 2801 or SF 3107.

Sections E, F, G, H, and I, are easy and self-explanatory.

Health Insurance: An employee must be enrolled within the Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB) and Federal Employee Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) programs for five years of service immediately preceding your annuity commencement date, or if enrolled less than five years, for the full period(s) of service during which coverage was available. FEHB coverage, and coverage under CHAMPUS, counts toward the five year requirement for health benefits.

Phyllis realized that she would have to enroll in the FEHB program and did so six years prior to her annuity date, thereby making herself eligible for FEHB on her retirement date.

Remember to order your retirement package and don't forget to attend the Pre-Retirement Planning Seminars that are offered by the Service.

You can download both Retirement packages from the following websites:

- [www.firstgov.gov](http://www.firstgov.gov) -At the bottom of the page click on Office of Citizen Services and Communications, then click on GSA Quick links, at the right and then click on forms on the left.
- [www.opm.gov](http://www.opm.gov)-- In the middle of the page is a section on retirement; click on retirement information, and then click on forms.

\*[Firebird 24](#) ran this article in April 2007, but we thought it might again be useful to those contemplating retirement in the next year.

## Steward in the Spotlight

We had a winner to our “Who am I?” contest. Tinesha Leverette correctly identified the mystery steward. And who was that woman behind the mask? Janice Williams-Littlejohn. Janice represents the SPEC/Stakeholder Liaison members.

## Sound Off!



Got something you want to tell us or others about? Want to express your opinion anonymously? We'd really like to hear from you. Leave your message at **(313) 628-3864** and we will print reasonable topics. Please speak distinctly and limit your comments to a few sentences.

## Turkey Draw

At the end of 2008, as in many years past, Chapter 24 Stewards conducted their “Turkey Draw”, to award Chapter members a “turkey” gift certificate for the year end holidays. Some of the winners were: **Gwen Aikens, Esther Bartrum, Bob Beckham, Marlene Betts, Claudia Brain, Carol Briney, Debra Copeland, Gary Drown, Felecia Felton, Cindy Hammers, Debbie Heil, Lori Hill, Bernadette Hill, Veronica Holmes, Dennis Johnson, Kelly Kester, Jamie Lemanski, Carol Lewis, Vandetta Logan, Michelle Manthis, Kendra Mathis, Patricia Mindykowski, Suzanne Owen, Renata Peterson, David Pitsch, Therese Reeser, Ron Rudnicki, Carol Sandlin, Neko Sikora, Denise Skafica, Andrea Smith, Doris J Smith, Shelly Stackhouse, Altoinette Staples, Evelyn Whitfield, Angela Williams-Morris, Maureen Wilson, George Zak, and Janet A Zureki.** Congratulations to all of you, and the best of luck in the New Year.

## 10 Signs It's Time to Quit

-by Kate Lorenz, Careerbuilder.com editor

“I like what I do. I just don't like where I work.” Sound familiar?

From unbearable co-workers to depressing work environments, there [are] things that can make even the best job a living hell. Here are some signs it's time to look for a new job.

### Sign No. 1: Your co-workers are annoying.

Obnoxious people can invade your work life. Let's face it, not everyone gets along perfectly. But you need to have some sort of harmonious relationship with fellow employees to get the job done. How are you supposed to get any work done when these guys keep getting in the way? They are distracting and impede productivity. Most offices have a Gossip, that one person who has the “scoop” all the time and is not afraid to share it. Misery loves company, and finds it often in the Whiner, who isn't afraid to complain and bellyache. And everyone has the Neighbor whose noisy distractions include his cellular ringtone, speakerphone and radio.

### Sign No. 2: The environment is toxic.

Everyone experience job highs and lows, but discontent could also be a sign of chronically depressing work environment or even a company in peril. A bad work environment is reflective of the culture of an entire business. Do you work in a less-than-nurturing atmosphere? Is morale constantly low? Have you been complaining for two solid years? It could be an organizational problem that applying feng shui to your cube won't fix.

### Sign No. 3: You're mentally exhausted by the end of the day.

Stress can cause low morale, decreased productivity and apathy towards work. Plus, it can spill into your personal life and even have a negative effect on your health. Today there are fewer people who are taking on more and more work. American workers experience burnout at an alarming rate. According to CareerBuilder, 68 percent of workers feel burnout at work, and 45 percent said their workloads are too heavy. Yes, we all have to pick up some slack and “take one for the team” from time to time. But if there's no end in sight, do yourself a favor and dust off your resume.

### Sign No. 4: Your boss is a nightmare.

Even though this person is your boss, it doesn't give him the license to do anything he wants. If you have a lousy boss, even the best job in the world can make life a living hell. Your relationship with your supervisor plays a big role in your overall professional happiness and success. Fighting to have your boss removed or waiting for your boss to change or get fired are rarely successful tactics. If you are working for someone who is always absent, unavailable, self-absorbed or untrustworthy, it's time to look for a better supervisor and a better opportunity.

### Sign No. 5: You're watching the clock...every 10 minutes.

Though you might not like to work, it's even worse when you are bored while you're there. One can only

watch so many videos on YouTube or bid on unneeded things on eBay. If you aren't feeling challenged, that's a sign that you need additional responsibilities or a change roles [sic]. And be warned, if you don't have any responsibility or find yourself with nothing to do, management might be trying to phase you out and you might be in danger of losing your job.

**Sign No. 6: You get no respect.**

Does any of this sound familiar? Your ideas aren't taken seriously; there are no opportunities for advancement; the boss ignores you; co-workers alienate you; you're discouraged from improving your skills with a course or seminar; you're passed over for a promotion—again; or you're excluded from key projects and strategizing sessions. So why are you still giving this organization your time, energy, and great ideas?

**Sign No. 7: Your co-workers act like animals.**

They live for themselves and only themselves. They irritate you. They offend you. They have no manners or ethics. And you work with them all. There's the Office Thief who steals your ideas. The Shirker arrives late, leaves early and disappears whenever work is near. The Buck-passer unloads her work onto everyone else and blames others for her mistakes. The Procrastinator delays things until the last possible minute, slowing you down by not having the information you need to meet your deadlines. The Interrupter stops by your cubicle 10 times a day to chat about her latest boyfriend despite your ringing telephone and pressing deadlines. And don't forget the infamous Elevator Person who rides up only one floor instead of taking the stairs.

**Sign No. 8: Nobody communicates.**

Although we live in a world of e-mail, cell phones, instant messages, Blackberries, WiFi and yes, even face-to-face conversation, there can still be a complete lack of communication. Whether it's a co-worker who's not returning your voice mail or the CEO not conveying a company's goals and accomplishments, the breakdown of communication can be frustrating and detrimental to your job. It can cost you an account, make you to miss a deadline, cause you to lose a client, and even get you fired.

**Sign No. 9: You're not valued.**

Forty-three percent of workers do not feel appreciated, and one-fourth of workers feel that they are just a "number" within their organization. You need to realize that you deserve credit for your successes. Recognition is important, and good companies implement programs to let employees know they are valued. Is your company doing anything to reward your efforts? Do you ever receive bonuses, perks, or positive feedback? If you boss has never heard of positive reinforcement, verbal or otherwise, find a company that will value your talents.

**Sign No. 10: You feel stifled.**

What kind of quality of life do you have? Is your 40-hour week turning into a 24/7 grind? While salary may seem like the end all and be all, your quality of life determines your overall happiness. How much time you spend on the job, working conditions, supervisors and subordinates can positively and negatively impact your job outlook. If you dread the time you spent at work, it should be a clear indicator that it's time to break free. A job shouldn't stifle you creatively, mentally or physically.

**Bottom line:**

Considering what you don't like about your current situation should give you insight into what you are seeking in future endeavors. If you know what your priorities and preferences are and actively seek them, work can be an enjoyable experience.

If, however, you've answered yes to more than four of these signs, then you might want to get started on a new job search.

*Editor's Note: Thanks to Kurt Hein for forwarding this article so that it might be reprinted.*

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**From Robert M. Schwartz's [The Legal Rights of Union Stewards](#)**

**“Who are these of lowly pay,  
With haggard look and hair of grey?  
They get no rest by day or night.  
They're always wrong. They're never right.  
They do not have a law degree,  
But go to bat for you and me.  
Though seldom have they been to college,  
They must possess the widest knowledge,  
Of labor grades and when to grieve,  
Vacation pay and sickness leave.  
Of overtime and who's to do it,  
Of coffee time and who's to brew it.  
The how and which and why and when,  
And all the problems of women and men.  
If, with forepersons they agree,  
Then they're rats who've got weak knees.  
If, to the workers they try to cater,  
They're branded as agitators.  
Those who have to take this slop  
Are called the STEWARDS of your shop.  
-Anonymous”**

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*Editor's Note: There are been several well deserved tributes and accolades to retiring Steward Ella Porter-Pride. I would like to also offer my thanks for her unwavering support and contributions to this newsletter. She'll be missed, but I can only wish her the best in her retirement.*

**Our Union**  
**NTEU**  
**Our Voice**



**Firebird 24**

**Jeri Burger**, President  
**Daniel Itchue**, Vice President  
**Marianne Gordon**, Secretary  
**Henry Morrison**, Treasurer  
**Karen Johnson**, Chief Steward

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