



The Fight Continues...Are You In?

June 2017—Volume 31

**SCAM ALERT**  
PHONE SCAM

- Fraudulent activity with the goal of stealing the call recipient's money or personal information
- Caller demands immediate payment or presents a bargain or free prize
- Phone scams are illegal

## Phone Scams Add to Private Tax Collection Concerns

NTEU is not the only group keeping a watchful eye on the IRS private tax collection program, rolled out in April. The Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) recently voiced his own concerns at a House IRS oversight hearing. TIGTA's concerns are underscored by widespread impersonation scams targeting taxpayers. In these scams, the caller claims to be an IRS employee, demands immediate payment of a tax debt and threatens arrest if it's not made. Generally, the IRS does not call taxpayers. However, the private collection agencies do make calls leaving taxpayers confused and vulnerable to the scams. For many taxpayers, a call from someone claiming to be collecting overdue tax debt is unsettling. In addition, the situation is made worse when threats are made. Now, those calls could be from an agency with a contract from the IRS and how is a taxpayer supposed to know the difference? NTEU opposed the legislation mandating the IRS to bring back private collection agencies. Past attempts at such a program have failed, costing taxpayers money and leading to abusive tactics on the part of the private collection agencies. TIGTA initiated

an audit to evaluate the IRS's policies on the program and agency efforts to mitigate risks to taxpayers. "We have identified numerous concerns during our audit, including the IRS's lack of commitment to assist taxpayers concerned that the PCAs are part of an impersonation scam, as well as our concerns related to the IRS's process for receiving taxpayer complaints about PCAs," said TIGTA Inspector General J. Russell George. Arrests were recently made connected to one organized effort at deceiving taxpayers but other scams remain ongoing. Please help Chapter 14 by voicing your concerns to your member of congress at [nteul4.org](http://nteul4.org)!

### This Month's Highlights!

- Phone Scams Rising
- National Grievance for TAS
- Arbitration Decision on QSI's
- Win an Apple iPad Campaign
- National Van Lines Benefit
- Choice Act Weakens Us
- Legislators Letter of Support
- Happy Father's Day

**NTEU**  
The National Treasury Employees Union

Chapter 14 • St. Louis, Missouri

**TAXPAYER  
ADVOCATE  
SERVICE**

YOUR VOICE AT THE IRS



### National Grievance:

#### *The TAS Telework Situation*

This month, NTEU filed a national grievance challenging practices within the Taxpayer Advocate Service (TAS) that negatively affect teleworking employees. Specifically, NTEU challenged blanket denials of Frequent and/or Recurring Telework Agreements without considering telework requests on a case-by-case basis, as required by the 2016 National Agreement (2016 NA). NTEU also challenged practices requiring employees on Frequent and/or Recurring Telework Agreements to request specific telework days on a weekly basis. NTEU further challenged requirements that teleworking employees report to the office for the purpose of mailing documents to taxpayers. These practices violate the 2016 NA, past practice, and/or constitute an unfair labor practice. The grievance demands that the IRS immedi-

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## TAXPAYER ADVOCATE SERVICE

*TAS Telework Continued...*

ately cease and desist in issuing blanket denials of telework requests; cease and desist from requiring employees on Frequent and/or Recurring Telework Agreements to update their telework days on a regular or random basis; post notice that it has committed an unfair labor practice; and in all other ways comply with contractual requirements regarding frequent and/or recurring telework. NTEU further requested a return to the status quo ante regarding practices for mailing documents to taxpayers. Chapter 14 will keep you apprised of developments. If you have any questions or comments on this grievance, please contact our office.

### National Van Lines Member Benefit Program



NTEU Chapter 14 has had a long-standing agreement with National Van Lines to offer NTEU members discounts based on shipment requirements when moving out-of-state, on storage-in-transit, warehouse handling, and pickup and delivery to and from storage in-transit. Other benefits of this agreement include:

- *Guaranteed pick-up and delivery on qualifying shipments*
- *Pick-up and delivery delay compensation of up to \$125 per day on qualifying shipments*

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## Favorable Arbitration Decision Regarding QSI's

### ARBITRATION



Recently, we received a favorable arbitration decision regarding NTEU's national grievance on the agency's delayed granting of Quality Step Increase (QSI) awards (copy attached). This grievance was filed when NTEU learned that the IRS did not plan to grant any QSIs based on employees' performance in FY 16, but instead delayed the granting of all QSIs for FY 16 until the first quarter of FY 17. This meant that employees who were eligible for QSIs at the time they received their annual performance appraisals did not learn if they had received a QSI until months or in some cases more than a year, after that performance review. The agency asserted that it had discretion to delay the awards, since under the 2016 National Agreement QSIs may be granted in any manner consistent with the QSI regulations. NTEU claimed that the QSI regulations, which were expressly incorporated into the language of Article 18, required QSIs to be granted "as soon as practicable," and that the

agency's new policy significantly delayed the granting of QSIs and thus violated the regulation. The arbitrator agreed with NTEU's position and sustained NTEU's grievance. Stating that "recognition delayed is recognition diluted," the arbitrator determined that the QSI regulations relate QSI awards to appraisal periods. Therefore, the agency must make decisions regarding QSIs as soon as practicable and at a time correlated to employees' rating periods. To remedy the agency's unjustified and unwarranted personnel actions, the arbitrator remanded "the dispute to the Parties for discussion and negotiations to determine an appropriate remedy, including prospective changes in the present procedure." In the coming weeks, we will discuss with the IRS what the "appropriate remedy" will be for the violations found by the arbitrator. If we cannot reach an agreement, we will likely go back to the arbitrator to seek a resolution. Chapter 14 will continue to keep you informed of all developments on this case. So stay tuned!

• *Full replacement valuation, up to \$50,000 per shipment, at no additional cost*

National Van Lines has a network of agents to serve every major city across America and believes that the move is not over until the customer is completely satisfied. Also, once a member has registered a shipment with National Van Lines, they will also receive an invitation to participate (at no cost or obligation) in Updater. Updater is a service that provides support to help transfer and connect utilities and home services, forward mail with

the USPS, and notify businesses and accounts of the new address. Members will also receive special, moving-related discounts. To arrange moving services or for more information, members can contact Ms. Janet Reynolds or Mr. Robert Curry via e-mail at: [jreynolds@berryvanlines.com](mailto:jreynolds@berryvanlines.com) or [rcurry1@berryvanlines.com](mailto:rcurry1@berryvanlines.com). They can also be reached at 1-800-355-6205. If you have any questions about this or any other NTEU member benefits, you may contact Talita Grayton via e-mail at [talita.grayton@nteu.org](mailto:talita.grayton@nteu.org) or 202-572-5500, extension—7023.

**Want to win an Apple iPad®?**

This month, NTEU is launching a campaign urging members to update their contact information to ensure they get news and alerts about key workplace issues. The campaign will include e-mail messages to members, Facebook posts and web site promotions. Members who take a moment to update their contact information any time during June will automatically be entered into a drawing to win an Apple iPad or one of 20 NTEU Power Packs (NTEU-logo USB drive and external battery for cell phones). We wish to encourage NTEU Chapter 14 members to update their information and, especially, their personal e-mail addresses and personal cell phone numbers. Any member can always update contact information through the NTEU site. Simply log-in at [www.nteu.org](http://www.nteu.org) by clicking on the yellow box on the top right corner of the page. Once logged in, click on the yellow box again and then "Manage my Account." It only takes a few minutes for members to update their contact information, but it's crucial to our goal of communicating with every single member during this critically important time for federal employees. Don't delay...you can do this today!



## Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

### Choice Act Weakens Protections for Financial Consumers

NTEU is urging members of Congress to oppose legislation this week that would gut the nation's preeminent financial consumer watchdog and weaken the robust American network of financial regulators. "The only people who would benefit from the so-called Choice Act are the financial renegades and scammers who prey on regular people just trying to save for the future, take out a loan or make smart investments," said Tony Reardon, NTEU National President. NTEU, in a Monday letter sent to Capitol Hill, urged House members to vote against H.R. 10, and nicknamed the "Wrong Choice" bill because it diminishes the ability of thousands of federal employees to carry out their agencies' missions of safeguarding the U.S. financial system. "The Wrong Choice bill simply ignores the contributions these federal em-

ployees are making to protect American depositors, consumers and investors," Reardon wrote. The proposal would all but destroy the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), which has returned nearly \$12 billion to consumers cheated by banks and other financial institutions. Its record of catching and preventing fraud and discriminatory lending practices is a tribute to the nonpartisan civil service employees who are dedicated to helping seniors, service members, college students and the general public from schemes to defraud or cheat them. But if the Choice Act became law, there would be massive layoffs at CFPB, including employees who were involuntarily transferred from other agencies when the CFPB was created six years ago. "I am astounded that Congress would even consider making such profound changes to

the work and duties of the financial regulatory agencies without providing for those employees to return to their former agencies," Reardon said. The CFPB has fielded more than 1 million consumer complaints since 2011, a sign that the agency is a valued advocate and watchdog. While the potential harm to the CFPB gets the most attention, the Choice Act also ruins the independence of several other financial regulators. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. (FDIC), the National Credit Union Administration, and the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency would no longer get their funding just from fees, but from Congressional appropriations, subjecting them to potential political interference, government shutdowns and budget uncertainty. For example, bank customers know that their deposits are insured by the FDIC in the

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did you  
know?

1 in 5



One in five Americans over the age of 65 has reportedly been the victim of a financial scam. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau will help protect all consumers from unscrupulous practices at the hands of financial services providers like those that scam our senior citizens.

*Choice Act Continued...*

event their bank fails. If there is a government shutdown or funding lapse, depositors could lose access to their bank accounts and the protections the FDIC provides. "Many of the institutions these agencies regulate are politically powerful and the regulators should not have to worry about whether Congress

will try to influence their work or withhold agency funding for political reasons," Reardon said. Finally, the Choice Act would eliminate the Securities and Exchange Commission's Reserve Fund, which would limit the resources the SEC uses to protect investors and monitor Wall Street. The bill could also force

some of the SEC's regional field offices to close. "The financial crisis of 2008 taught us that our government needed more tools – not fewer – to combat fraud and mismanagement," Reardon said. "We hope Congress will keep the financial cops on the beat to prevent another crisis in the future."

## HAPPY Father's DAY

Chapter 14 loves our many Dads, Pappy's, Pops, Daddy's and Fathers. No matter what you choose to call the "ol' man" in your life, rest assured we appreciate all you do. We believe it was said best with words from William Shakespeare:

"I love those who can smile in trouble, who can gather strength from distress, and grow brave by reflection. 'Tis the business of little minds to shrink, but they whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves their conduct, will pursue their principles unto death."

Happy Father's Day to all you "Father Figures" in the world!



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## Legislators Send Letter of Support for Federal Employees

102 Members of the House of Representatives sent a letter to Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) and Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), strongly opposing the assaults on federal pay and retirement contained in the administration's FY 2018 budget proposal. Calling the administration's proposals that impact the take-home pay and retirement benefits for current federal employees and retirees "destructive," the legislators asked both congressional leaders to block any effort to bring such proposals to the House floor for votes. They pointed out that no other group has

been asked to sacrifice more for deficit reduction than the federal workforce. As you well know, federal employees have already been deprived of \$182 billion in pay and benefits. The FY 2018 budget would add another \$149 billion in cuts. We appreciate these members' support in fighting to stop pay and retirement cuts, and for holding Congress accountable to keep its promises to its workforce and retirees. Clearly, these members of Congress recognize the valuable service provided by our members to the nation.

