



"Since we can't agree to disagree, how about we disagree on agreeing."

## Negative OPM Proposal

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is proposing that agencies be allowed to require all seasonal, temporary and intermittent employees covered by the Federal Employees Health Benefits program (FEHBP) to make premium payments when in non-pay status. Currently, employees have the option to do so, but may also elect continued coverage and then repay the advanced premiums when returning to pay status. In comments submitted last week, NTEU argued that OPM should

be the model employer it set out to be when extending FEHBP coverage to seasonal employees two years ago. What's more, OPM has not shown why it is fiscally necessary to impose these costs on seasonal employees. This would not be an intelligent move for the agency nor the employees. It is negative for the agency on employee retention and negative for employees on debt creation.

### This Month's Highlights!

- Negative OPM Proposal
- Awards Policy Update
- Private Debt Collectors
- 2016 Holiday Party
- 2 Hours of Admin Time
- Address Updated?
- November Milestones
- FEHB Open Season



## November Milestones

NTEU Chapter 14 loves to celebrate our employees and their accomplishments! However, when we start talking about our lovely members...well that's when we charge up the lighting and shine the excitement on them. In the month of November, we'd like to recognize the following members for their years of commitment:



- ◆ Kevin Flood—30 Years
- ◆ Linda Massey—20 Years
- ◆ Dennis Honkomp—15 Years
- ◆ Donna Lieu—10 Years
- ◆ Keecie Powell Sr.—5 Years
- ◆ Anedra Higgins—5 Years

This is over 80 years of combined service and knowledge. Congratulations to you all! And continue the fight good along-side NTEU.

## FEHB Open Season

FEHB is back! It *almost* feels like a holiday within itself for open enrollment. Benefits change each year and we fight hard to ensure your coverage. Please review, update and make changes to your current benefits enrollment by the December 12th deadline.



Ready to party with Chapter 14!?

It's coming... this year the party will be on December 10th, 2016 at the Hilton Saint Louis Frontenac! Plan ahead—RSVP's for the event are due by December 2nd! See one of your area Stewards or visit our website for more details at [nteu14.org](http://nteu14.org) !



## Update on Fiscal Year 2017 Employee Awards Policy

The administration has issued an instructional memorandum to agencies regarding the policy for awards provided in Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 to frontline employees. In 2010, a cap was instituted that limited awards for both senior executives and frontline employees, which has resulted in significantly lower awards for all federal employees in recent years. In December 2015, the President issued an Executive Order (EO) implementing a series of reforms for the Senior Executive Service (SES), which included a new evaluation system, and which also raised the awards cap for

these individuals' awards for FY 2017. Following the release of the EO, NTEU discussed the need with both the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of Personnel Management to correspondingly increase the awards cap for all other federal employees, who as you know, make up more than 99 percent of the federal workforce. In August, we shared a follow-up letter to these conversations, which reiterated the federal government's obligation to address FY 2017 awards policy for all employees, particularly at a time when across-the-board pay raises and locality pay have either been non-existent or tiny. This latest memorandum instructs agencies to raise the current 1% cap on awards in place since 2010 for non-SES and non-SL/ST employees to 1.5% for

FY 2017. This means that for FY 2017 agencies will be authorized to spend up to 1.5% of their aggregate salary spending levels on individual performance and contribution awards, as well as for any recruitment, retention, relocation incentives (*the so-called three R's*) and Quality Step Increases. **Additionally, SES and SL/ST salaries will no longer be included in the 1.5% of agency aggregate salaries for the purposes of awards calculation for frontline employees.** We believe this is a good first step towards starting restoration of federal employee compensation and towards ensuring overall workplace fairness along with employee morale. NTEU Chapter 14 leaders will continue its legislative and bargaining efforts to secure higher pay raises on your behalf.



## Private Debt Collectors

We have all heard that the definition of insanity is to repeatedly do the same thing expecting different results. Using that definition, the U.S. Congress can now be considered officially insane. Seven years after it proved to be a disaster, the use of outside debt collectors has again been approved by Congress for use by the IRS. You may be asking yourself, "Haven't we been here before?" Sadly, you would be right. Private Debt Collectors are wrong for our country and undermine your professionalism as a federal employee. They are not held to the same higher standards and produce ridiculously terrible results. Yet, you (as a federal employee) have always reached over the bar in high standards and produce great results. See something wrong with that picture? Communicate these and many other facts to your House and Senate leaders today! Visit our website at: [www.nteu14.org](http://www.nteu14.org).

## Time Off for Holiday Events

From IRS: In order to accommodate holiday activities from December 1st through 31st, 2016, managers are authorized to grant employees two hours of excused absence (administrative leave). This excused absence may be approved for any appropriate time during the workday and, if preferred, may be combined with lunch periods to accommodate an extended holiday office luncheon.



Friendly Reminder—Please remember to update your address information through HR Connect for year-end statements. W-2's can be quite important when completing your tax return and staying in compliance.



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