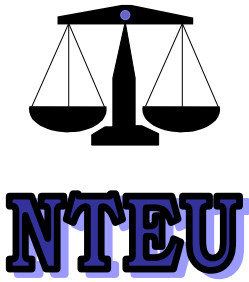


January 2002



# Alert!

## FEDS FINALLY GET FREQUENT FLYER BENEFITS

On December 28, 2001, President Bush signed S.1438, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2002. Section 1116 of the law authorizes Feds to retain promotional items, including frequent flyer miles, earned on official travel.



Any promotional benefits or material received from a travel service provider in connection with official travel may be retained for personal use, if such items are obtained under the same conditions as those offered to the general public at no additional cost to the Government. This includes all benefits earned, including those earned before enactment of the new law. Of course, benefits are all taxable.

A travel advisory, explaining the provisions of the law, was issued by the IRS Office of Communications, and can be found on the Intranet, accessible from IRWEB, at the Communications and Liaison Home Page.



## Federal Long Term Care Insurance

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management has announced that Metropolitan Life Insurance Company and John Hancock Life Insurance Company have been selected as the insurers for the Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program.

The complete premium schedules and benefit options for the program will be announced after John Hancock and Metropolitan Life conduct final market research with members of the groups eligible to enroll.

An early-enrollment opportunity for the program is scheduled for early 2002 said OPM. OPM expects that most applicants will benefit from the extensive education and marketing campaign, which will begin in next month and culminate in an open season registration that will be held sometime in late summer or early fall.

Annuitants will receive information at their mailing addresses and employees will receive information at their worksites.

# Chapter 52

The Metropolitan Life/John Hancock team will present several thousand work site and offsite meetings across the country to introduce the new program.

The new web site has a lot of information on this program. <http://www.opm.gov/insure/ltc/>



### GSA Adopts Taxpayer Mileage Rate

GSA's decision to mirror the IRS rate of 36.5¢ was made on Jan. 8th and GSA expects it will be published in the Federal Register shortly if not by the time you read this.

The IRS announced the rate change to 36.5¢ on November 6, 2001. The rate change from 34.5¢ to 36.5¢ will be effective for travel by government employees for travel on or after Jan. 21, 2002, the GSA spokesman said.



### NTEU Warns Of Serious Disruption In Labor-Management Relations

**Washington, D.C.** The president of the nation's largest independent union of federal employees today warned of a potentially serious and costly disruption in federal sector labor-management relations stemming from an administration move to vacate all seven seats on a key panel charged with decision-making responsibilities on federal workplace conditions and related matters.

President Colleen M. Kelley of the National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU) called "irresponsible" President Bush's action, taken with no notice, to terminate immediately the terms of all seven members of the Federal Service Impasses Panel (FSIP). Along with federal agencies and other labor organizations, NTEU has cases pending before the FSIP, and other cases "likely are in the pipeline" heading for FSIP consideration, Kelley said.

"Without an actively-functioning FSIP," the NTEU leader said, "the nation faces a costly disruption in labor relations" in the federal sector, with the likelihood of "a serious backlog of cases that eventually will have to be decided."

Moreover, the union president said, the FSIP's parent body, the three-member Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA), which has overall responsibility for federal sector labor-management relations, has been operating for months without anyone filling its key position of General Counsel.



That, President Kelley said, has disrupted consideration of matters within the responsibility of the Authority, including the issuance of unfair labor practice complaints. Among the FLRA General Counsel's other key responsibilities are to take steps to encourage the use of alternative dispute resolution techniques and to expand labor and management training and education programs. "Our nation cannot afford these vacancies," the NTEU leader said.

The FSIP, which operates as an arm of the FLRA, is responsible for resolving impasses that might occur involving federal agencies and their unions arising from negotiations over conditions of employment

under several important statutes, including the key Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute.

The members of the FSIP serve part-time at the pleasure of the president. The three members of the parent FLRA, which was established by the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, serve full-time five-year terms.

"While the president has the right to take this action" with respect to the FSIP, President Kelley said, "it was done with no notice and with no indication of when these positions would be filled."

The NTEU leader said she "fears that this action by the president is another step in an effort to reduce the effectiveness of employee voices in the federal workplace," pointing to an executive order early in the administration abolishing labor-management partnerships.

"We ought to be using every available tool to involve managers and front-line workers in a cooperative effort to bring to the American people the best possible service, efficiently and at the best possible cost," Kelley said. "Steps like vacating every seat on the FSIP and failing to fill the office of FLRA General Counsel don't help. They hurt."



### **Special Rate Case Comes To Fruition**

After almost 19 years of litigation, a settlement agreement has been signed in the "Special Rates" class action, under which the government will pay over \$173 million in settlement of the claims of the 212,000 "special rate" employees who are in the class. The agreement must be granted final approval by the court, a process that is estimated to take about 10 months.

NTEU filed this case, now known as NTEU v. James, in 1983 to challenge the legality of a regulation of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). While that regulation was in effect, from 1982 to 1988, the Special Rate employees were short-changed on their annual salary increases. "Special rate" employees occupy positions that the government has a difficult time retaining or recruiting employees and are paid on a different schedule from GS employees.

"Special rate" employees who were shortchanged by the illegal OPM rule will receive back pay to compensate them for lost salary, together with an additional three percent to compensate them for lost premium pay. They also will receive interest on these sums calculated at the very favorable Back Pay Act rates. Finally, those class members who are retired and whose "last three" salary years were adversely affected by the illegal rule will receive a lump sum amount to compensate them for lost retirement benefits. Eligible survivors of deceased class members may claim the recoveries owed to the class members.

The payments are still 4 to 10 months away. And they could range from a few hundred dollars to as much as \$30,000 for some engineers.

All of the current and former feds who are due back pay have a couple of things in common: All worked in special rate jobs (engineers, scientists, medical personnel and other hard-to-hire people worldwide, including GS 2 through 7 clerical employees in many areas between fiscal year 1982 and fiscal 1988.



During that 6-year period many of the special raters were denied all, or parts of, annual pay raises that went to rank and file white-collar government workers. If you weren't in a special rate job during those years you are not due any back pay.

Still left is for the Court of Federal Claims to formally approve the settlement. Once that occurs, class members should receive information about their individual recoveries and the data upon which that calculation was made, within four months. The first payments should be made about nine months after final court approval.

Further information about the case and the settlement can be found on a special web site set up to cover the settlement at: [www.SpecialRatesSettlement.com](http://www.SpecialRatesSettlement.com)

In addition, information can be obtained from the Settlement Administrator through a toll-free number, (800) 750-3406. We ask employees not to call NTEU directly for information. All pertinent information will be on the web page and at the 800 number.

At this time, no information is available about the size of individual recoveries, nor are we currently able to tell individuals whether they are members of the class.



### **NTEU Works To Keep LMSB Promotions “Inside”**

NTEU is working closely with LMSB on the proposed external hiring that LMSB is planning to pursue next year. Our goal is to minimize any external hiring and to ensure that LMSB provides appropriate consideration to all internal candidates before it goes forward with this proposal.

LMSB foresees and envisions external hiring may occur in six locations: Atlanta (Atlanta Metro and Smyrna); Northern New Jersey (Parsippany, Paramus, Fairfield, Paterson, Mountainside and Edison); Dallas/Ft. Worth; Houston Metro Area; San Francisco Bay Area (San Francisco, Walnut Creek, Oakland, Santa Rosa, Vallejo, San Mateo, San Jose and San Rafael) and the Greater New York Area.

Management is basing their assumed external hiring locations on a workload study, anticipated selections, promotions and retirements. It is expected that a briefing and discussions with NTEU will be held early this year. External hires are expected on board by this June.

Before any external hiring takes place, LMSB has agreed to post a third round of positions and has apparently also agreed to pay moving expenses to employees selected for these openings. Hopefully, completion of the current selection process, in conjunction with selections made as a result of the proposed additional posting, will greatly reduce the need for external hires.



### **Keeping pace with the military?**

Not Really...For all the hoopla about keeping federal employee pay tied to military pay, not so in the final analysis. Military Service members will see an average increase of 6.9 percent in their January pay.

"It's the largest pay increase in 20 years," said Navy Capt. Chris Kopang, director of compensation at the Defense Department, in a recently published interview.

In general, officers will see their pay increase 5 percent, he said, and enlisted service members' get anywhere from 6 to 10 percent depending on their grade. We think they deserve and earn every penny.



### **TSP Open Season Ends Soon**



The current open enrollment period for the TSP for both civilian and military investors ends January 31. Remember this year employees under the newer FERS program can invest up to 12 percent of salary (subject to the new \$11,000 individual contribution limit) and those under the CSRS retirement plan can invest 7 percent of salary.

But to increase your percentage of contribution, or to reallocate money to a different fund or funds, you must act during the open season.

### **Corporate Amnesty?**

LMSB Commissioner, Larry Langdon, was named in a recent NEW YORK TIMES story dealing with a so-called "amnesty" for corporations that admitted tax "indiscretions." That must be the new, politically-correct, term for tax fraud in the New IRS.



Anyway, some 95 corporations came forward to confess and Langdon seemed very pleased with himself, in spite of the fact that there are at least 1,700 such companies out there taking advantage of these schemes. That gives Mr. Langdon a batting average of .056, according to our math. Good thing he doesn't play for the Astros...too bad he doesn't play for the Yankees!

### **FLEXI Under Attack Again**

Surely, It does not come as a shock to you that management is opposed to Flexiplace. It is not about productivity. Everyone knows by now that workers are more productive when they're not constantly interrupted by the various distractions of the traditional office. In fact, OPM has issued a report that says Flexi is one of the best things since sliced bread!

No. It is all about control. People who use Flexiplace might see their evaluations lowered eventually because they are not in the office and therefore *how can they possible contribute to the work group?*

Let there be no mistake about this. Managers will have to counsel you before lowering your overall evaluation. They apparently will not hesitate to say that an employee on Flexi will get a lesser rating in Employee Contribution/Satisfaction (their name for Plays Well With Others) simply because that employee is not in the office to have some sort of blissful interaction with his/her manager or coworkers.

NTEU expects a major war with IRS over this one. Be alert when a manager suggests that you to give up your right to Flexi in order to get a 4 or a 5 in Plays Well With Others. There are not many fringe benefits to being an IRS employee anymore...don't allow them to take away one of the few you have.

## **Senator Grassley Trashes IRS Again**

Senate Finance Committee ranking Republican Charles Grassley of Iowa is once again beating his anti-IRS war drum.



This time he's concluded that the TIGTA report claiming that the IRS has lost track of 2,300 PC's is reason to degrade the agency again. Of course what Grassley doesn't say is that these PC's are over three years old and were no doubt headed for the scrap heap or a charitable donation.

Grassley said in a letter to Office of Management and Budget Director Mitch Daniels last week that Congress has spent millions to meet continued funding requests to modernize IRS systems.

"Now we learn that the IRS is like a child who asks for a doll all year and then loses it the day after Christmas--or, in this case, loses 2,300 dolls," Grassley wrote.

He cited a Treasury Department report that revealed that the IRS is missing about 2,300 computers, a finding that Grassley said reflects the "historical poor management of money and personnel" at the IRS.

"It is my view that serious consideration should be given to placing a limitation on the IRS' budget until there is real improvement--not real promises--in inventory management," he wrote.

Since Grassley made his speech, however, the IRS has found about 1,500 of the missing machines.



## **ABUSIVE TRUST CASES**

Are you now, or have you in the past, been doing GS-12 abusive trust case work? If you are working Unincorporated Business Organization (UBO) cases it is grade GS 12 work. UBO's are typically schedule "C" businesses. We feel that the majority of abusive trust cases are GS-12 work .

Last March Chapter 239 filed a mass grievance for higher-graded duties on behalf of all GS-11 Revenue Agents working abusive trust cases. The Union's goal was, and is, to have all Revenue Agents doing grade 12 work paid for their efforts as GS-12's.

If you worked abusive trusts and you are a GS-11 Revenue Agent, contact Tom Jones at the Union Office to discuss this.

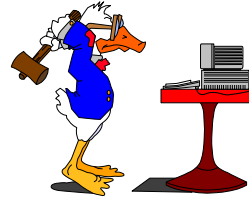


# Tom's Humor Page

## What A Difference 30 Years Makes

- 1971: Long Hair  
2001: Longing for hair
- 1971: The perfect high  
2001: The perfect high-yield mutual fund
- 1971: KEG  
2001: EKG
- 1971: Seeds and stems  
2001: Roughage
- 1971: Acid Rock  
2001: Acid reflux
- 1971: Going to a new, hip joint  
2001: Receiving a new hip joint
- 1971: The Grateful Dead  
2001: Dr. Kavorkian
- 1971: Peace sign  
2001: Mercedes logo
- 1971: Rolling Stones  
2001: Kidney stones
- 1971: Disco  
2001: Costco
- 1971: Growing pot  
2001: Growing pot belly
- 1971: Taking acid  
2001: Taking antacid
- 1971: Parents begging you to get a haircut  
2001: Children begging you to have head shaved
- 1971: Trying to look like Marlon Brando or Liz Taylor  
2001: Trying not to look like Marlon Brando or Liz Taylor
- 1971: Popping pills, smoking joints  
2001: Popping joints
- 1971: Moving to California because it's cool  
2001: Moving to California because it's warm
- 1971: Passing the driving test  
2001: Passing the vision test

**Employee:** My password for the LAN isn't working.  
**IT:** Fill out a help request on line.  
**Employee:** I can't get online because my password doesn't work.  
**IT:** Send me an e-mail about it.  
**Employee:** I CAN'T SEND AN E-MAIL BECAUSE I CAN'T GET ON THE STINKIN' LAN!



## Science Discovery

Investigators at a major research institution have discovered the heaviest element known to science. This startling new discovery has been tentatively named "administration" (Ad). This new element has no protons or electrons, thus having an atomic weight of 0. It does, however, have one neutron, 125 assistant neutrons, 75 vice neutrons and 111 assistant vice neutrons. These 312 particles are held together by a force called morons, which are surrounded by lepton-like particles called peons. Since it has no electrons, Administration is inert. However, it can be detected as it impedes every reaction with which it comes in contact. Administration has a normal half-life of approximately three years. It does not decay, but instead develops a reorganization in which a portion of the assistant neutrons, vice neutrons and assistant vice neutrons exchange places. In fact, an Administration's sample mass will actually increase over time since with each reorganization some of the morons inevitably become neutrons. This characteristic of moron promotion leads some scientists to speculate that Administration is formed whenever morons reach a certain density. This hypothetical quantity is referred to as a "critical morass." You know it when you see it.

-Dick Compton

# BS - Bingo

Do you keep falling asleep in Group meetings? What about those long and boring conference calls? Here is a way to change all of that!

**How to play:** Check off each block when you hear these words during a Group meeting, briefing, or phone call. When you get five blocks horizontally, vertically, or diagonally, stand up and shout **BS!!**

<b>Back-Up</b>	<b>Strategic Fit</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Best Practice</b>	<b>Bottom Line</b>
<b>Revisit</b>	<b>Out-of-the-Box</b>	<b>Filing Season</b>	<b>Out of the Loop</b>	<b>New Hires</b>
<b>Value-Added</b>	<b>Proactive</b>	<b>Win-Win</b>	<b>Stand-up</b>	<b>Fast Track</b>
<b>Result-Driven</b>	<b>Empower [or] Empowerment</b>	<b>Reorganize(d)</b>	<b>Total Quality [or] Quality Driven</b>	<b>Touch Base</b>
<b>Priority</b>	<b>Customer Focus[ed]</b>	<b>Inventory(ies)</b>	<b>Game Plan</b>	<b>Employee Satisfaction</b>

**Testimonials from satisfied players:**

"I had only been in the meeting for five minutes when I won." -Jack W. - Boston

"My attention span at meetings has improved dramatically." -David D. - Florida

"What a gas. Meetings will never be the same for me after my first win." -Bill R - Sacramento

"The atmosphere was tense in the last process meeting as 14 of us waited for the 5<sup>th</sup> box." -Ben G. - Denver

"The speaker was stunned as eight of us screamed 'BS' for the third time in 2 hours." - Mary L. – Oakland ISS



## Attention: San Antonio POD Employees

The "Have a Heart and Give a Gift" community service program, suggested by Henry Amezquita and Frances Jordan, and put into operation by Eve Weeks, Carmen Hansen and Audrey Entzenberger, was an outstanding success.

The program accepted Christmas gift donation for the Children of the Sann's Shelter in San Antonio. They had a total of 94 children from the ages of 5 weeks to 17 years old living there. Each child received two gifts, putting a smile on their faces for Christmas.

Not only did employees donate gifts, but they wrapped and delivered the gifts to the shelter.

Chapter 52 wishes to thank San Antonio POD employees for your support. It is employees like you who make the Christmas season bright.



### ELECTED SENATORS

Phil Gramm, 366-9494, 202-224-2934  
Kay Bailey Hutchinson, 340-2885, 202-224-5922

### ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

Henry Bonilla, 697-9055, 202-225-4511  
Charles Gonzalez, 472-6195, 202-225-3236  
Ciro Rodriguez, 924-7383, 202-225-1640  
Lamar Smith, 821-5024, 202-225-4236



The **Chapter 52 Alert!** can also be found on our Chapter Web Page at <http://nteu52.hypermart.net>. You can e-mail any Chapter officer, staff member or steward from the page.

*Chapter 52 President*, Tom Jones  
*Chief Steward*, Bill Grace  
*Asst. Chief Steward*, Mick Eskew

*Send comments and/or articles to  
1700SANW or fax 210-706-5376,  
attention Alert! Editor Susan Ryan*

