

March 2002



NTEU

Alert!

Happy St. Patrick's Day

UNIONS LOBBY CONGRESS ON CRITICAL FEDERAL EMPLOYEE ISSUES

The two largest white-collar federal unions, the **American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE)** and the **National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU)** had grass-roots leaders in DC last week to sharpen their legislative priorities and lobby Congress.

Their top issues included contracting out reform, pay, civil service issues and health care. Wednesday was the first Senate hearing on the Truthfulness, Responsibility and Accountability in Contracting, known as the **TRAC** act.

NTEU's National President, Colleen Kelley and **AFGE's** National President, Bobby Harnage, testified in favor of passage of TRAC. TRAC legislation would require the government to get its contracting-out house in order. The union argued that contractors already out-number federal workers, and that they are often used by agencies to skirt budgets and job ceilings. Also, contractors often cost more and frequently deliver less.

NTEU, which is still celebrating a major legal victory... a 14-year long legal battle to force the government to pay 212,000 special rate employees about \$173 billion for raises denied them between 1982-88... also had its people there. Chapter 52 President Tom Jones and Chapter Legislative Representative Randy Mann were there to represent the interests of Chapter 52 on critical federal issues such as federal pay and benefits, contracting out federal jobs (TRAC), IRS RRA Section 1203(b), Agency funding, and RO law enforcement status.

Legislation (S-1935) introduced in the Senate would make immigration and customs inspectors, canine enforcement officers and IRS revenue officers eligible for the special retirement benefits applying to federal law enforcement officers.

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Sponsor Sen. Barbara Mikulski, D-Md., said that employees in those positions face many of the same risks and hardships faced by employees already under that system, which provides an enhanced benefit with retirement eligibility with 20 years of service.

Colleen Kelley, pointed out, "They do the work of law enforcement every day, but do not have the recognition of law enforcement officers." In addition, these feds do not currently receive law officer benefits, like the right to retire after 20 years of service. NTEU is a long time supporter of the status change for the customs and IRS workers that they represent.

The National Treasury Employees Union, which represents many employees in the Customs Service and Immigration and Naturalization Service, has been pushing for years to expand eligibility for law enforcement retirement.



NTEU 2002 NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE ISSUES AND HOW THEY IMPACT YOU AS A FEDERAL EMPLOYEE

Federal Pay and Benefits: Because of the success of the NTEU national and grassroots efforts, the 2002 pay raise you got was a full percentage point higher than the administration supported. A substantial gap between public and private sector pay still remains, however. Attendees at the Conference emphasized to their legislators the negative impact of the continuing gap on federal recruiting and retention efforts. They pressed for implementation of the Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act (FEPCA), a law designed to close the public-private pay gap but not fully implemented since its passage more than a decade ago. The Bush Administration has proposed a 2003 pay raise of 4.1 percent for military personnel, which NTEU supports, but only a 2.6 percent pay raise for federal civilian employees.

Contracting Out of Federal Jobs: Attention to this ongoing issue is a priority, NTEU members told their federal legislators, because the administration's continuing drive to contract to the private sector an increasing number of federal jobs despite any meaningful information about the real cost and effectiveness of doing so. Agencies face an administrative directive to contract out more the 127,000 federal jobs through the end of fiscal year 2003 alone. That directive was issued even though the contractor workforce, at some six million, is already triple the size of the federal workforce and at a cost to taxpayers of more that \$120 billion, far exceeds the total pay and benefits of federal workers. NTEU is the leader in calling for an end to federal contracting out absent true accountability, and urging instead that agencies have the resources they need to accomplish their missions. More on this on page 10 of the **Alert!**

Agency Funding Needs: Increasingly, federal agencies find themselves with expanding and in some cases new responsibilities, but without the funding to meet both the new mandates and their traditional duties. Conference participants emphasized that this "resource gap" hurts not just agencies and their employees, but the nation as well. Thanks in large part to NTEU's national and grassroots efforts, the 2002 Treasury Appropriations bill, signed nearly a month after the start of this fiscal year, provided funding for many NTEU-represented agencies, including the IRS and Customs Service, beyond what was initially proposed by the

administration. Nonetheless, the message carried by delegates to Capitol Hill was that funding levels continue to fall short of agency needs across government. This shortfall, they said, affects not just agency programs, but the ability of the government to provide the training employees need to fairly compete with the private sector and to retain high quality workers and attract others to government service.

IRS Restructuring and Section 1203(b): In the face of a determined educational effort by NTEU, the message has gotten through to both the Internal Revenue Service and the Treasury Department that a section of the 1998 IRS Restructuring and Reform Act (RRA) mandating termination for various offenses is having serious detrimental effects in the workplace. The result is administration-proposed legislation that would modify in meaningful ways RRA Section 1203(b). NTEU members pressed the point that this section of the law serves no useful purpose; gets in the way of providing the quality service that every employee wants to deliver; and works against efforts to improve the workplace. Along with information on the other priority issues, delegates provided a fact sheet showing the detrimental effects of section 1203(b) and information on proposed changes to the law, which are supported by NTEU.

This is an election year... your vote will make a difference!

DO YOU KNOW HOW YOUR CURRENT TEXAS SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES VOTE ON FEDERAL ISSUES?

The following is a recap of the federal issues that were voted on in the 1st session of the 107th Congress that directly impact federal employees, and the voting record of our Texas Senators and Representatives.



Vote #1 – This vote was on a resolution to do away with ergonomic standards for private and federal workplaces. The vote prevented these protections from being issued by the Labor Department.

NTEU position: NO

The resolution passed 223-206.

Vote #2 – This vote was on the Democratic substitute to the FY2002 Budget Resolution. The substitute would have provided an additional \$18 billion non-defense discretionary funding, much of which would have been added to agency funding levels.

NTEU position: YES

It was rejected 183-243.

Vote #3 – This vote was on the adoption of the conference agreement providing supplemental appropriations for FY2001. The bill included \$116 million for the IRS for mailing tax rebate checks.

NTEU position: YES

The measure passed 375-30

Vote #4 – This vote was on a motion by Congressman Bonior to restore language previously added by the Armed Service Committee requiring the Defense Department to conduct public-private competitions before contracting out federal jobs. This would have prohibited the Defense Department from contracting out work without giving federal employees an opportunity to compete for their jobs.

NTEU position : YES

The motion was rejected 197-221.

Vote #5 – This vote was on an amendment by Congressman Oberstar to insist that all passenger and baggage screeners at the Nation’s largest airports be federal employees, not contract employees.

NTEU position: YES

The amendment was rejected 214-218

Vote #6 – This vote was on the rule for floor consideration of the FY2002 Defense Appropriations bill. NTEU opposed the rule because it did not permit an amendment to be offered appropriating an additional \$6.5 billion for homeland security, including added funds for the Customs Service.

NTEU position: NO

The rule was adopted 216-211.

Texas District	Senator Representative	Per Cent NTEU agreed Votes	Agreed /Cast	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
Sen.	Gramm (R)	25%	1/4	-	-	X	+	X	-
Sen.	Hutchinson (R)	17%	1/6	-	-	-	+	-	-
10	Doggett (D)	100%	6/6	+	+	+	+	+	+
11	Edwards (D)	100%	6/6	+	+	+	+	+	+
16	Reyes (D)	100%	6/6	+	+	+	+	+	+
15	Hinojosa (D)	100%	6/6	+	+	+	+	+	+
20	Gonzales (D)	100%	6/6	+	+	+	+	+	+
27	Ortiz (D)	83%	5/6	+	+	+	+	-	+
28	Rodriguez (D)	100%	6/6	+	+	+	+	+	+
14	Paul (R)	0%	0/6	-	-	-	-	-	-
21	Smith (R)	17%	1/6	-	-	+	-	-	-
23	Bonilla (R)	17%	1/6	-	-	+	-	-	-

KEY: + Favorable, - Unfavorable, X Not Voting

The above is not a political endorsement of any particular person or party.
It is included here to provide information to our members.

This is a congressional voting year. All the Congressional seats are up for grabs, although some incumbents may be running unopposed. Senator Phil Gramm has announced his retirement and so will not be seeking reelection.

The primaries, held on Tuesday decided the candidates for office. We will run a special edition of the *Alert!* to inform members on each of the candidates who will be running for office.

Remember: How congress votes on federal issues affects your pay and benefits!

ELECTIONS IN NOVEMBER GET OUT AND VOTE!



EXPANDED, SUPER SAFE INVESTMENT OPTIONS

Beginning April 1 federal and postal investors will be able to rollover more money from more sources, into their tax-deferred Thrift Savings Plan.

Is this a big deal? You bet! Can you say Enron? Or shaky 401k plans?

Since the TSP first allowed current government workers to roll-over money from existing 401k plans and IRAs into the federal 401k plan, millions of dollars worth of outside 401k plan money has been put into the TSP. One new fed transferred more than one million dollars from an outside 401k retirement account into the TSP. (First reported by FederalNewsRadio.Com in the September 5, 2001 Federal Report headlined, "The TSP's First Real Millionaire.")



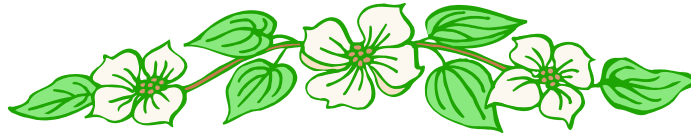
Since the recession began and since people have been reminded that 401k plans are only as good as their investments, many people outside government have looked longingly at the TSP.

The \$100 billion federal 401k plan is the most monitored, most audited and safest in the nation. In addition to having your retirement nestegg, it has money invested by high government officials, current and former senators and representatives and a vice president or two.

The TSP also has an ace in the hole. It's an investment option not available to anybody outside government: the G-fund. G-fund money is invested in special U.S. Treasury Securities. They are guaranteed by the government and have never had a loss. And they aren't available to anyone but eligible feds (and retirees with accounts).

Beginning in April, under a rule's change proposed by the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board, the TSP will accept transfers from what it calls, "*an expanded group of retirement plans.*"

This is something you will definitely want to check out.



“In its truest sense, freedom cannot be bestowed, it must be achieved.” -
Franklin D. Roosevelt

The thoughts and prayers of Chapter 52 are with the families of the servicemen recently lost and wounded in battle, supporting the cause of freedom.



UNCLE SAM'S JOB STATS FOR 2001

Most feds remember the federal hiring freeze early last year. Now it seems that it actually didn't prevent agencies from posting job vacancies with Uncle Sam's website, www.usajobs.gov.

A study done by the Merit Systems Protection Board found that just over 188,000 jobs were posted in fiscal year 2001. Most of them were white-collar positions from I-T specialists to nurses, engineers and accountants. Three quarters of the vacancies were posted by ten departments. MSPB will be publishing a full report based on the findings of this study later this year.

Interestingly enough, we are currently in a hiring freeze status, yet if you look at the COL you would never know it!

Federal agencies tend to bunch most of their job vacancy announcements soon after their annual appropriations for a year are approved, according to data collected by the Merit Systems Protection Board for an ongoing study of federal hiring.

MSPB says that three-fourths of the 188,000 job vacancies that agencies announced in fiscal 2001 were posted between December and April. There was "hardly any activity after April" but

that activity picked up again in August and September, "probably indicating a push to fill jobs before the end of the fiscal year."

MSPB also found that despite widespread perceptions that most federal vacancies are restricted only to current employees, about 60 percent of jobs were open to everyone. However, the merit board added that some announcements were posted later than the opening date, effectively reducing the number of days applicants could apply and raising questions about whether agencies are conducting the required fair and open competitions.

Nearly nine-tenths of the jobs announced in fiscal 2001 were white-collar. Ten departments posted 75 percent of the vacancy announcements: Army, Interior, Agriculture, Air Force, Health and Human Services, Navy, Justice, **Treasury**, Commerce and Defense agencies.



MINORITY HIRING



The majority of people hired by the federal government last year were minorities: Hispanics, Blacks and women. According to data from the Office of Personnel Management, 12310 non-postal workers were hired for federal jobs, 9490 of that number were minorities.

During the Clinton years diversity programs required agencies to increase minority employment, especially in agencies where they were "under represented" compared to their percentage of the total U.S. work force. OPM Director **Kay Coles James** says the percentage of minorities---except Hispanics---employed by the government now exceeds their percentage representation in the national work force.

The percentage of veterans in the federal work force is holding about steady at 26 percent, the Office of Personnel Management reports in its latest compilation of statistics, through fiscal 2000. That's more than twice the percentage in the labor pool as a whole (11 percent), in part a result of the hiring preferences the government gives to veterans. Veterans accounted for 31 percent of new hires during the year while accounting for 45 percent of retirees.



OPM WEBSITE

There's a new place to check out recent legislative changes that affect federal employees. Feds can find it on the Office of Personnel Management's web site. It offers the latest information regarding recent pay and leave changes. The modifications involve health benefits for reservists called to active duty in support of contingency operations, military leave for funeral honors duty,

hostile fire pay, as well as some biweekly and annual limitations on premium pay. (Word to the wise: Access this web site from home...not on government computers.)



THE FEDERAL PAY GAP

During the 1990s white-collar worker pay slipped dramatically, thanks to the failure of the Clinton administration to fully implement the 1990 Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act. That law, signed by former President **George Bush** and developed by a Democratic Congress, promised federal workers a decade of "catch-up" pay raises. The idea was to close the government-designated "pay gap" between white-collar civil servants and their industry counterparts.



It didn't happen. And the pay gap remains.

The current Bush administration has made it clear that it agrees with Clinton officials who held down pay raises from 1993 through 2000 because they said the industry vs. government pay comparison procedure was "flawed." Clinton argued that the only way to accurately measure the value of a job is to compare "total compensation". That's the value of both actual salary and fringe benefits such as annual leave, vacation, sick leave, insurance and (this is the big one) retirement benefits. Critics of the paycheck vs. paycheck match-up say it's like fitting someone with a shirt or blouse by measuring only the neck size.

Many officials believe that if the total compensation concept was used to compare government vs. private sector pay the so-called "pay gap" between government and industry would narrow in most grades, or disappear. That would be justification for even smaller raises in the future. Last December, OPM Director **Kay Coles James** said the comparability principle is "deeply flawed." In a speech to the Classification and Compensation Society, she said the current federal pay program is "a system whose time has come and gone."

In his first budget President Bush proposed a 3.6 percent raise. Congress raised that to 4.6 percent to give civilians pay raise parity with the military. This year the Bush administration has proposed a 2.6 percent raise for civilians in 2003. Congress will push to boost it to the 4.1 percent the President proposed for military personnel.

But even if Congress succeeds again in forcing pay raise parity (on a year by year basis) it's clear the FEPCA pay raise formula is dead in the water.



WHO SCREENS THE SCREENERS: NEW AGENCY A ROLE MODEL?

The still-under-construction **Transportation Security Administration** (TSA) doesn't have a management team, doesn't have its own employees and doesn't know exactly how it will operate. But it may be the blueprint for how you will be paid, promoted and evaluated in the not-too-distant future. In fact, it may represent the blueprint for the GOVERNMENT of the not-too-distant future.

TSA won't be complete until November. But it's already seen by many as a model for government-wide changes, ranging from new performance guidelines to an end to longevity pay raises.

It will feature the "flat" look that so many agencies claim to want but fail to achieve, and will likely develop a workable (and acceptable to workers) pay-for-performance system based on team and crew, versus individual performance.

The agency is so new that its web page is still under construction. The TSA, which will handle U.S. airport security, has hired one of the nation's top-headhunter firms, Korn Ferry International, to find it 81 airport security directors who will be paid between \$104,800 and \$150,000.

But the backbone of the new outfit will be more than 30,000 baggage and passenger screeners who are expected to be paid between \$30,000 and \$40,000. They will be federal workers, but will not be covered by some of the same rules/red tape (choose one) that apply to other civil servants.

For the past 60 years, a variety of do-gooders (politicians, political scientists, self-styled good government types and hard-headed businessmen and women) have tried to reform the government. Some had motives that were pure. Some of the politicians only wanted to create a more "responsive" (as in under their thumbs) civil service, and some business types saw a way to make a killing by reforming, or wrecking, the government's ability to do its job.

Most had only limited success, especially with their plans, which the Bush administration has adopted, to introduce pay-for-performance into government.

Paul Light, of the Brookings Institution, says the TSA has great potential and a lot going for it. He thinks the TSA (which will collect revenues to finance its operations) could become like other government-corporations (like the FDIC) *"that often have a higher esprit de corps"* because employees *"see tangibles between what they are doing and revenue collecting...the linkage between them."*

Appearing on the FedTalk radio show, Light, considered by many to be THE Washington expert on how the government works, said the TSA has a number of things going for it.

"The new agency will have only about 5 layers between screeners and the undersecretary of the agency. That" he said, *"compares to 15 or more layers in many other federal agencies."* Light said he didn't know the perfect system, but the idea is to *"keep it flat, lean, make sure people at the bottom can see the top...and vice versa."*

Light said he expects that TSA will measure and reward performance *"via teams or crews,"* rather than on an individual basis. And that could be a good thing.

Despite the lack of some civil service job protections (TSA will not be automatically covered by Title 5 rules and regulations), Light said the new agency could start out with some of the best and brightest from government. *"I've been told some very talented feds want to be part of this mission...and federal workers are primarily motivated by mission."*



SKY MARSHALL JOBS LURE FEDS

Experienced federal employees are hearing Uncle Sam's siren song loud and clear! Retired feds, feds who have left the government for other careers and former military feds, make up nearly 100,000 of the folks who have applied for federal government jobs in response to September 11th. They've applied for everything from baggage screener jobs to slots as sky marshalls, border patrol and customs officers. Language, computer and security experts have offered services as well.



OPENING YOUR JOB TO PRIVATE COMPETITION

From the *Federal Diary*, by **Stephen Barr**:

The scene: Room 216 in the Senate Hart building, where about 250 union members packed into the Senate's largest hearing room and 100 more were turned away.

The subject: President Bush's plan to open up more federal jobs to private competition.

The sentiment: Bush's numerical requirements for "competitive sourcing" appear arbitrary and difficult to justify as a priority when the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks have left many agencies scrambling to reorganize for homeland defense.

Senate Democrats sponsored the hearing, held on a day when **AFGE** and **NTEU** had called hundreds of their members to Washington for meetings and rallies.

Bush's management agenda requires agencies to convert or open 15 percent of federal jobs identified as commercial in nature to private competition by the end of fiscal 2003. Over time, Bush has pledged to open up one in four federal jobs to competition.

TOM'S HUMOR PAGE

Generation X Office Lingo

Blamestorming: Sitting around in a group discussing why a deadline was missed or a project failed, and who was responsible.

Cube Farm: An office filled with cubicles.

Ego Surfing: Scanning the Net, databases, print media and so on, looking for references to one's own name.

Elvis Year: The peak year of something's or someone's popularity. "Barney the Dinosaur's Elvis year was 1993."

404: Someone who's clueless. "Don't bother asking him; he's 404." From the www error message "404 Not Found", meaning the requested document couldn't be located.

Idea Hamsters: People who always seem to have their idea generators running.

Keyboard Plaque: The disgusting buildup of dirt and crud found on computer keyboards.

Mouse Potato: The online, wired generation's answer to the couch potato.

Ohnosecond: That minuscule fraction of time in which you realize that you've just made a big mistake.

Prairie Dogging: When someone yells or drops something loudly in a cube farm, and people's heads pop up over the walls to see what's going on.

SITCOMs: What yuppies turn into when they have children and one of them stops working to stay home with the kids. Stands for **S**ingle **I**ncome, **T**wo **C**hildren, **O**ppressive **M**ortgage.

Starter Marriage: A short-lived first marriage that ends in divorce with no kids, no property and no regrets.

Stress Puppy: A person who seems to thrive on being stressed out and whiny.

Swiped Out: An ATM or credit card that has been rendered useless because the magnetic strip is worn away from extensive use.

Tourists: People who take training classes just to get a vacation from their jobs. "We had three serious students in the class; the rest were just tourists."

Treeware: Hacker slang for documentation or other printed material.

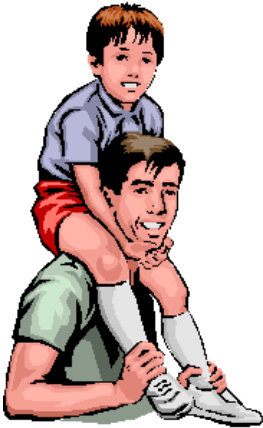
Uninstalled: Euphemism for being fired.

ONE LINERS:

1. He who laughs last, thinks slowest.
2. Everyone has a photographic memory, but some don't have any film.
3. When the chips are down, the buffalo is empty.
4. A fine is a tax for doing wrong. A tax is a fine for doing well.
5. Light travels faster than sound. This is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.
6. Just remember...if the world didn't suck we would all fall off.

Something to Ponder

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One day a father of a very wealthy family took his son on a trip to the country with the firm purpose of showing his son how poor people can be.

They spent a couple of days and nights on the farm of what would be considered a very poor family. On their return from their trip, the father asked his son, "How was the trip?"

"It was great dad."

"Did you see how poor people can be?" the father asked.

"Oh yeah" said the son.

"So what did you learn from the trip?" asked the father.

The son answered "I saw that we have one dog, and they have four. We have a pool that reaches to the middle of our garden and they have a creek that has no end. We have imported lanterns in our garden and they have the stars at night. Our patio reaches to the front yard and they have the whole horizon. We have a small piece of land to live on and they have fields that go beyond our sight. We have servants who serve us, but they serve others. We buy our food, but they grow theirs. We have walls around our property to protect us, they have friends to protect them."

With this the boy's father was speechless. Then his son added, "Thanks dad for showing me how poor we are."

Too many times we forget what we have and concentrate on what we don't have.

What is one person's worthless object is another's prize possession. It is all based on one's perspective. Makes you wonder what would happen if we all gave thanks for all the bounty we have, instead of worrying about wanting more. Take joy in all you have, especially your friends.





WASHINGTON - Aircraft nose art with the words "Let's roll!" -- America's two-word marching order in the fight against terrorism will be displayed on various aircraft throughout the Air Force as a way of recognizing the heroes and victims of the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States.

The words were made famous by Todd Beamer, a passenger on Flight 93.

Beamer, a 32-year-old businessman, Sunday school teacher, husband, father and hero, led other passengers in fighting

terrorists for control of Flight 93 before it crashed into a field in western Pennsylvania. He was overheard on a cellular phone reciting the Lord's Prayer and saying "Let's roll!" as passengers charged the terrorists.

"'Let's roll!' has served as a rallying cry for this nation as we go forward in our war on terrorism," said Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. John P. Jumper. "We are proud to display this new nose art on our aircraft."

The passengers of Flight 93 won one of the first victories in the fight against terrorism. There has been much speculation about the terrorists' intentions for Flight 93, but it is widely believed that either the White House or the U.S. Capitol building was the intended target.

The nose art design depicts an eagle soaring in front of the U.S. flag, with the words "Spirit of 9-11" on the top and "Let's roll!" on the bottom. The design was created by Senior Airman Duane White, a journeyman from Air Combat Command's multimedia center at Langley Air Force Base, Va.

The Thunderbirds and other Air Force demonstration teams will apply this nose art on all aircraft, while major commands and wings will be authorized to apply the nose art to one aircraft of their choice.

For thousands of years, warriors, such as the Vikings, Zulus, Native Americans, samurai and many others, have followed a tradition of decorating their instruments of war. These instruments could include the warriors or their weapons. The Air Force has used nose art throughout much of its history, and for a variety of reasons.

The "Let's roll!" nose art is being used to continue the remembrance of the events of Sept. 11, spur on the nation's current patriotic spirit and pay tribute to the heroes and victims in the war against terrorism.

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.

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