

# NTEU Chapter 52 Steward Reference Guide

## CHAPTER 2 RESOURCES INFORMATION

### RESOURCES FOR STEWARDS

To be successful in representing employees in a professional, efficient and effective manner stewards must rely on many sources of information. The following list may be helpful in identifying the particular needs of the stewards.

#### A. The Union

1. Its organizational structure.
2. Its officers and lines of authority.
3. Its policies.
4. Its services and resources.

#### B. Bargaining Unit Employees

1. Name, position title, grade, office location, office phone number, date, and NTEU membership status of each employee within the steward's area of responsibility.
2. The concerns and problems affecting employees within the steward's area of responsibility.

#### C. The Employing Agency

1. Its organizational structure.
2. Its mission.
3. Its line of authority, including the names and titles of the principal officials.
4. Its policies in dealing with the Union and the workers.

#### D. The Workplace

1. Its organizational structure.
2. The mission of each organizational component
3. The lines of authority, including the name, title, and work location of each supervisor and management official.
4. Problems experienced by the workers.

#### E. The Contract

1. Its contents: rights and obligations.
2. Its protections.
3. The interpretation given to the contract's provisions by the parties and the previous arbitration decisions.
4. The procedures for filing a grievance, including the time limits at each step.
5. Advantages and disadvantages of the various contract provisions.

## **II. MATERIALS FOR STEWARDS**

Various supplies and/or materials are available in the Union Office to assist stewards in fulfilling their responsibilities as a professional representative.

### A. CD-ROM Disk for Stewards

1. Contract and Agreements
2. Chapter By-laws and NTEU National Constitution
3. Chapter Manuals
4. Chapter Forms and Information
5. Grievance Procedures
6. Time Keeping Forms
7. Chapter Forms and Information
8. Steward Reference Guide
9. Critical Job Elements

B. Name, address, and other pertinent information of each member in the steward's area of responsibility

- C. Dues withholding [Form 1187](#) can be found on this disk
- D. NTEU Cash Membership Payment forms.
- E. Grievance forms (see Grievance Folder on this disk)
- F. Miscellaneous supplies for grievance folders
- J. Union Library Resources

## **A SOURCE OF INFORMATION TO EMPLOYEES**

If you ask the average rank-in-file employee for their impression of NTEU, the usual response will be "My steward helped me get my paycheck straightened out," "My steward lets me know what is going on," or "My steward is a bum." Clearly, in the minds of most employees, YOU (the steward) ARE THE UNION. They look to you for information, for guidance on how to interpret the contract, and for the "Union Position" on anything from annual appraisals to Union-made automobiles.

Because of your position, your co-workers will assume you have access to information that most employees don't have. In fact, this is usually true. The Union's communication system is certainly much faster and more reliable than management's.

As a Chapter 52 Steward, you can always call your Assistant Chief Steward or the Chief Steward if you have any questions. You also have other sources of information:

### 1. Chapter 52 Newsletter

Our Newsletter is sent to each member by Outlook e-mail and can be found on the Chapter's web site, <http://www.nteu52.org>. Be sure that you read it, as the newsletter contains a wealth of information on national issues, local matters such as negotiations and grievances, and general items of interest to our members. If you have any questions on any items you find in the Newsletter, call the editor, Chapter President, Chief Steward, or Asst. Chief Steward.

### 2. NTEU Bulletin

The NTEU Bulletin is mailed monthly to all members at their home address. If you or someone in your area is not receiving the Bulletin, please fill out and submit a "Change of Address Form" on the National Union's web site, [www.nteu.org](http://www.nteu.org).

### 3. Stewards Update

All NTEU representatives should receive the Stewards Update, a training publication for Stewards written by the NTEU National Office staff. Many stewards find it useful to save their Updates for future reference.

### 4. E-mail on Outlook

On a continuing base, the President, Chief Steward and/or the Asst. Chief Steward will send all Stewards e-mails, which contains current information on items of interest to Stewards and members.

It is important that you read and share the information you receive with the Union members in the workplace. Here are some suggested methods to let people know “what’s happening”:

- a. Hold coffee breaks, lunchtime meetings, 10-minute meetings before or after work, or other brief meetings with your members.
- b. Make desk drops to quickly spread information about a particular issue of importance.
- c. Write an article about significant happenings in your area for the Chapter 52 Alert!. Subject to editing and space/deadline restrictions, we will attempt to publish any articles from Stewards that are of interest to all chapter members.
- d. Use the opportunities provided during Group Meetings and Joint IRS/NTEU award presentations. Our Chapter 52 IRS/NTEU Contract Awards Program Agreement provides that all performance awards will be given in a joint ceremony with management and NTEU. These ceremonies can provide an opportunity for Stewards to talk about the “hot” topics of the moment in the Chapter.

## **A SOURCE OF INFORMATION TO CHAPTER LEADERS**

Chapter 52 is a fairly large chapter with approximately 400 members. The Chapter is responsible for employees in the headquarters and many different posts of duty; Austin Federal Office Building, Austin Echelon, Austin Rundberg, San Antonio, El Paso, Corpus Christi, Victoria, Bryan, Waco, Laredo, Harlingen and McAllen.

In a chapter this diverse, two or three people can never keep track of the different happenings in all the various work areas. Therefore, Union Leaders must rely on Stewards to keep them informed on the following items:

1. Changes in working conditions - NTEU has the right to negotiate any “change in working conditions” that management wants to implement anywhere in the Bargaining Unit. Too often, however, management “forgets” to send formal notice of these changes to the Chapter President, as required by the National Agreement (Article 47). When this happens, it’s up to our Stewards to let the Union Office know what’s happening, so we can make a request to negotiate, if needed.
2. Members’ Concerns - What are the members thinking? What suggestions do they have? Call or e-mail a note to the Union Office and let the Staff know so appropriate action can be taken, if possible.
3. Potential Leaders - Even though we have over 30 people active in some phase of Chapter 52’s work (Stewards, Officers, committee members, and others), we are always on the lookout for new activists. If you know of someone you would like to recommend, send a note to the Union Office, or call one of the Officers.

## **CONTENTS - NTEU CHAPTER 52 LIBRARY**

Check with the Union Office for articles, books and other reference material available.

### **SUMMARY OF SHOP STEWARD RIGHTS**

A shop steward has the following rights:

1. To be the exclusive representative of unit employees within any organizational boundaries imposed by the contract or the union.
2. To decide what grievances to file and which to let the employee file without union representation. The union can refuse to represent an employee because it believes the grievance is unlikely to succeed, it will cost the union too much money or other resources, or it is against the best policy interests of the union. The union steward can also refuse to represent a nonmember in matters outside the contract and collective bargaining
3. To attend any grievance meeting management has with an employee who files without union representation and to be informed of (and agree with) any grievance outcome.
4. To be informed in advance of any formal meeting a manager has with employees to discuss personnel policies, practices and working conditions. To attend the meeting on official time, to ask questions related to the topics the manager raises and to make a brief statement to employees about the union's position on the issue under discussion.
5. To delay any change management wants to implement until management has notified the union, bargained with it if requested, and reached agreement. The steward can also demand that unilaterally changes be revoked until bargaining is complete.
6. To talk to employees confidentially about union matters, and, if it is during non-work time, to do so without informing a manager of the discussion.
7. To get access to any documentary records management has that are needed to file a grievance, negotiate or otherwise make a representational decision.
8. To be free of retaliation, coercion or other interference for exercising any right as well as to have reasonable accommodations made to his or her workload for the time spent on official time.
9. To file grievances on behalf of unit employees.
10. To be treated by management as an equal and to engage in robust debate.

### **RESPONSES TO VIOLATIONS OF A STEWARD'S STATUTORY RIGHTS**

The best way to solve labor law problems is quickly and without third party involvement. Here is a list of options you have when trying to decide how to correct a labor law problem.

1. If there has been a threat of retaliation or coercion, try to verify it by taking detailed notes, sending the manager a memo asking him or her to confirm the threat, or just confirming the threat in your own memo to the manager and the chief steward. This will protect you if the manager carries through on the threat.

2. Once the threat is verified or witnessed, have a meeting with the manager to talk about why it was made and what can be done to correct the problem. Focus on the real problem the manager has versus any position you or he has taken.
3. If a one-on-one meeting does not settle the matter, get a meeting with higher level officials from both sides, e.g., the chief steward and personnel or Territory Manager.
4. Have the chief steward or chapter president raise the matter in any management meetings they attend. Raise it in the next steward meeting so everyone knows what to do.
5. If the violation involves a violation of employee rights, pass out a flyer(s) in the manager's work group to make sure employees know how to watch the manager closely for violations and who to contact. Use the chapter newsletter if needed to get the word out even further.
6. Put the matter on the LMRC or Partnership agenda if necessary.
7. If the deadline for filing a grievance has not passed, file a grievance citing the section of the law that was violated. Try to wrap all violations that occurred during the filing period into one grievance.
8. If the grievance deadline has passed or the chapter wants to bring in an outside party to investigate, file an unfair labor practice with the Federal Labor Relations Authority.
9. Look for something management wants and make a deal.