

NTEU IS HERE TO KEEP YOU INFORMED

There is so much happening. NTEU is here to provide information if you are confused or have questions about, for example, the recent Executive Order that addresses Federal Unions (there are copies of the EOs on the table outside the union office for you to take home to read). You can also go to the [NTEU National website](#) for information about this and other issues that affect your working environment. It is more important than ever to be an “informed consumer.” Please stop by the union office (O 1 G22) or drop us an email at NTEU@nrc.gov.

BEST WISHES TO MARIA SCHWARTZ IN RETIREMENT

Our own Executive Vice President, Maria Schwartz, is retiring at the end of the week after almost 27 years at the NRC. The last 3 years were working full time for our Chapter. While we are so very happy for her, we will also miss her and her dedication to you and to NTEU Chapter 208. On Wednesday and Thursday afternoons after 2:30, we will have some cake on the table just inside the union office to celebrate Maria’s retirement. Please feel free to stop by the union office sometime this week if you want to say goodbye and wish Maria all the best.

Maria provided comments at our last agency EEO Briefing on June 6th. She would like to leave you with those words.

NTEU COMMENTS FROM JUNE 6, 2018, EEO COMMISSION BRIEF

Good afternoon, Chairman Svinicki, Commissioner Burns, newly re-appointed Commission Baran, and a warm welcome to our two new Commissioners, Commissioner Caputo and Commissioner Wright. Good afternoon, as well, to our leadership and managers, and, from my perspective as the Executive Vice President of Chapter 208 of the National Treasury Employees Union, our most important audience this afternoon, our bargaining unit employees.

In his EDO Update of May 9, 2018, Mr. McCree stated that he is proud to be a part of the NRC. Honestly, I am too. And I would like to say that I am always that proud, because we have an important mission to accomplish, and we have good leaders and good managers, and we have amazing employees. But as a representative of our bargaining unit employees, I am sometimes tempered in my enthusiasm by my awareness that there are too many instances of harassment, too many instances of discrimination, and too many incidents where trust is breached. So, I would always like to say that I am proud... but... sometimes, I can’t.

When I was putting together NTEU’s comments at this, my last appearance before the Commission, I wanted these comments to reflect that NTEU is aware that while the agency does many things well, there continues to be leaders and managers who fail to live up to the NRC values; there continues to be leaders and managers who do not demonstrate a commitment to Integrity, Openness, and Respect; and, there are too many managers, supported by our leadership, who hide behind FEVS results and supposed action plans instead of embracing the opportunities that nurture a healthier organization.

When I was young girl sitting around the family dinner table (and I am from a large family), one evening my father commented that there was so much noise during dinner that it was hard to have real dinner time conversations. To make his point, one evening at dinner time, without our knowledge, my father placed a tape recorder under the table. When he played back the tape, it was obvious that we certainly were a noisy lot. However, what we also heard through all the noise, was my little brother who was quietly and politely asking for someone to pass him the butter.

He made a general request – “could someone pass me the butter.” He made specific requests – “Maria could you pass me the butter.” He made requests for help with his request – “Mike, would you ask Maria to pass me the butter.” Throughout the entire dinner, he remained polite in his quest for butter. He never got the butter.

When my siblings and I heard the recording, at first, we noticed all the noise my father had mentioned but then we became aware of Steve’s little voice and his request for butter. We thought it was kind of funny. We were kids, we didn’t see how really awful it was for Steve to keep politely asking his own family to help him with a simple task. We didn’t empathize, we laughed about it. And we loved Steve (we still do) but we didn’t see the harm that he had experienced. We would have just said “suck it up, Steve; where’s the harm” if he had asked us what we thought of it all. Now, as I look back on this event, how I regret my behavior. How I wish I had listened to his quiet, polite request.

I fear that many of our bargaining unit employees, like my younger brother, Steve, don’t always seem to have a voice. And having a voice is the first step in the quest for a trusting relationship; and because being heard is affirming, it is also critical to being engaged and empowered.

This forum has given me the opportunity as a representative for NTEU, to speak the truth as I see it as experienced by many of our bargaining unit employees. While the FEVS and the Culture Survey appear to confirm that NRC gets a lot of things ‘right’ at this agency, trust in our leadership seems to consistently lag behind. I believe that so much of that is because no matter how politely our employees ask, even though told they are the most important asset of our agency, they know, from their experiences or that of their colleagues, that, quite often, no one is really listening.

Our leaders and managers now talk a lot about empowerment. What does it mean? I think we all know that one of the primary ways that you empower your employees is to listen to them.

The agency seems to finally get it -- that it is important to get out in front of an issue instead of running to catch up. It is apparent in some of our most recent initiatives -- and there are several good examples of this over the last year such as the Transformation Initiative, the Leadership Initiative, and the NRO/NRR Merger Working group – all of which NTEU Chapter 208 participated in. The agency is beginning to really embrace the value of getting out in front of an initiative and the important role it plays in avoiding the churn that accompanies lagging behind.

However, it is clear that it is more important than ever to stay out in front of cultural changes that accompany our various initiatives. And, fortunately, some of our leaders and managers really do appear to understand how important this is.

Without a clear road map that defines roles and responsibilities, it won't matter if we talk about where we are headed. If employees don't feel empowered or don't feel they will get the training they need because it doesn't square with the metrics that are being used, it won't matter if our leadership and managers THINK they are providing appropriate resources. Employees will get lost in your details if you don't listen to what they are telling you. And they ARE trying to talk to you.

The Open Door Policy which is getting a lot of attention at the present moment, is a good start. But you, as our leaders and our managers, have to go to your employees; they should not be expected to always have to come to you.

About a year ago, I went with a very smart, dedicated, and earnest employee to speak with someone in a leadership role about that employee's concerns about how things were being done in his division. He took advantage of the Open Door Policy. The employee asked me to attend with him. I was so impressed with his preparation and how earnest he was. The employee brought manuals; he brought examples; he brought ideas. But at the end of a long discussion, he was told that he had many great ideas, but they were not ideas the NRC could use because they had been developed in a different culture. That employee left feeling ANYTHING but empowered. And trust was certainly off the table too. Because the employee knew that the outcome wasn't just a disagreement on approaches; he knew he had spent his time talking to the wind.

In this, my final appearance before the Commissioners, our leadership, and our managers, I ask you, I urge you, actually, I implore you, in the name of your employees, to reflect on your behaviors – that really DO matter – and the negative impact those behaviors can have on your employees. And, I would call to your attention that this impact is often compounded by the employee's membership in a protected class. Ask any number of older employees in our agency about the way they feel they are being marginalized every day. Ask any number of employees from other protected classes whether it doesn't seem crystal clear to them why they are being treated differently than their coworkers.

Listen to what your employees are telling you, I guarantee that you will find this very enlightening.

As I say good bye, I would also like to say that I care deeply about the NRC and its employees and most of the time I can also say I am proud that I have worked here for 27 years. I do want the very best outcomes for our agency in all its endeavors. And so my parting wish, and NTEU Chapter 208's ongoing wish, is that our agency is successful, and that underlying that success is your commitment to actively listen to your employees, that you work with your employees to

engage them in the agency's mission by providing the tools that they need to be successful and to be empowered – that you truly value your employees, and resolve to treat them with dignity and respect.

Thank you.