

AN OPEN LETTER TO IRS EMPLOYEES ABOUT THE 2005 EMPLOYEE SURVEY

As you know by now, NTEU has told the IRS that it opposes the 2005 Employee Survey. We have done this for two primary reasons:

1. The survey process to date has been very ineffective in producing positive changes for employees. Virtually nothing is done with employee ideas year after year, and managers with chronically low employee satisfaction scores continue to be rewarded with promotions and awards. One could easily argue that the survey process is a waste or approximately 200,000 staff hours a year.
2. Management made changes in the survey process without informing employees or the union in advance and bargaining over those changes. Those changes are very damaging for employees.

We asked you not to take the survey this year to show your dissatisfaction with the survey process, and we thank the thousands of you who did not take it. Participation fell by almost 30 percent this year. Combined with the people who already were choosing to not take it, the result was that nearly 60,000 refused to participate.

But now that we have made our thoughts known to management, what happens next?

- NTEU strongly favors having a process where employees can voice their opinions to management at the group or unit level on up.
- We want to see the survey process reactivated, but only after changes are made to hold managers accountable for fixing low scores in their work area—whether it is a group or entire division.
- We want assurances that actions will be taken promptly in response to the feedback.

We have invoked negotiations and filed a national grievance to accomplish that. We have also asked management to stop any further implementation of the survey process until we settle those disputes.

Unfortunately, management appears to be going ahead by scheduling meetings with employees to talk about the survey results and seek solutions to problems. Consequently, NTEU has no choice but to invoke its rights under the law, and you will see the NTEU stewards in your meeting acting differently as a result.

The law provides that the union can insist that management only talk with its elected representatives about the survey data and changes that need be made. While we would prefer a process where management can talk directly with employees, we are denying management our agreement to continue that process given how much of a waste of employee time these meetings turn out to be. We have told them that they must come to a bargaining table if they want to talk about the survey results, and we will negotiate enforceable collective bargaining agreements outlining the changes that must be made in each group, unit, territory, area, campus, and division. Any discussion with employees will be treated as a violation of law and penalties sought.

Until management complies with the law, NTEU representatives in these meetings will be acting more like traditional representatives than as facilitators. They likely will state the union's opposition to conducting the meeting. If the meeting goes forward, they will likely exercise their rights under Article 8, Section 1F of the contract to ask questions, make demands, and invite you to meet with them in private in the union office after the meeting if any of you think that there are problems the union can help you address.

This will probably be uncomfortable for everyone, but it is a necessary part of the process of continuing to send management the message that they should stop wasting your time with these useless meetings that rarely, if ever, result in progress. All too often today, managers make decisions that might boost efficiency and customer service, but which undercut employee satisfaction. The concept of "balanced measures" has been virtually lost and employees forgotten in management's decision-making processes.