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NTEU Leader Applauds Senate Subcommittee Action To Prevent IRS Customer Service Cutbacks; Cites Bipartisan Opposition to Plan

Washington, D.C.—The head of the union representing thousands of Internal Revenue Service (IRS) employees expressed her pleasure at the inclusion by a key Senate subcommittee of NTEU-backed language that would prevent significant cutbacks in IRS customer service pending a detailed study of the impact on both taxpayer service and compliance with the nation's tax laws.

President Colleen M. Kelley of the National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU) praised the work of Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) in helping secure approval of language sought by NTEU in the fiscal 2006 Treasury-Transportation Appropriations bill. The legislation was approved by the Senate Appropriations subcommittee on Tuesday and will be considered by the full Appropriations Committee today.

The subcommittee action calls for a study by the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) and is in line with a similar step by the full House of Representatives, Kelley said. "This represents the growing bipartisan realization that planned IRS cuts in customer service will have a serious and detrimental impact" around the country, the union leader said.

Under the IRS plan, it would close, by Nov. 1, 68 of its Taxpayer Assistance Centers (TACs) nationwide as well as shut three of its telephone call sites where taxpayers can get help and

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NTEU Welcomes Call for TAC Closing Review—Add One

information, and cut back by 15 hours a week the amount of time such telephone help otherwise would be available. The call sites to be closed are in Boston, Chicago and Houston.

NTEU members and chapters around the country have conducted a series of rallies and press conferences—often attended by local and federal elected officials—in large cities and small towns across the country to bring home to the public the impact from the closing of the TACs and call sites.

President Kelley has been joined in criticizing and questioning the IRS plans by TIGTA itself, by the National Taxpayer Advocate, the public-private IRS Oversight Board and various public interest groups—all of which have warned that the cuts will fall most heavily on populations least able to deal effectively with them.

“This detrimental impact,” the NTEU leader said, “will hurt taxpayers who only want assistance in complying with complicated tax law. We should be making that easier for them, not more difficult by pulling the assistance they depend on.”

NTEU is the largest independent federal union, representing some 150,000 employees in 30 agencies and departments, including about 94,000 in the IRS.

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