

HHS UPDATE

NTEU National Treasury Employees Union

Reardon Meets with Secretary Becerra

National President Tony Reardon met with Secretary Xavier Becerra yesterday to discuss repairing the troubled labor-management relationship between NTEU and HHS.

Reardon shared the frustration he and NTEU leaders and members have with the current environment and emphasized the need for quick action on the part of the Secretary to pull back damaging practices still in place from the previous administration and to restore our ability to represent our employees fully and fairly. Secretary Becerra indicated his long support for labor unions and federal workers and told Reardon that the relationship moving forward would not be like the last four years.

NTEU is pressing HHS to comply with President Biden's executive order on restoring collective bargaining rights and reinstate the 2010 contract until a new contract can be negotiated. Becerra said he would review NTEU's requests for action and respond within two weeks.

NTEU was pleased that Becerra expressed an eagerness to start fresh and get back to the bargaining table to reach agreement on a mutually beneficial contract. We will keep you updated on any developments.

After Fight, Bridge Program to Take Effect at ORA

Employees in the FDA Office of Regulatory Affairs (ORA) will soon be able to take advantage of a negotiated program providing opportunities for reassignments, details and job swaps.

After NTEU and HHS negotiated an agreement to assist ORA employees impacted by a 2017 program alignment, the agency refused to sign it. Following more than two years of legal back and forth, NTEU persisted, and HHS finally signed the agreement last week. The program allows bargaining unit employees to change program areas where they have some existing level of knowledge, skill, or experience and where there is an operational or fiscal need.

Here are highlights of the agreement:

- FDA/ORA will notify bargaining unit employees of Bridge Program vacancies through the daily ORA News email message, which will include information on qualifications and how to apply for each position.

- Quarterly emails will be sent to ORA employees reminding them that the Bridge Program is available for career growth and development opportunities.
- Supervisory approval is not needed to apply for Bridge Program vacancies.
- ORA will create an intranet page where employees can publicize their interest in exchanging positions under the Bridge Program.

Cameras for Virtual Meetings Are Not Mandatory

NTEU has received confirmation that employees who participate in virtual meetings may keep their cameras off.

NTEU raised the issue with HHS management after ACF employees received instructions mandating the use of cameras for a virtual meeting on April 8. Management confirmed that any such requirement would have to be first bargained with NTEU and employees cannot be penalized if they do not turn on cameras for virtual meetings.