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# Inside The Fishbowl

## Official Newsletter of NTEU 280

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***Survey: Let us know what topics you would like us to address in a Lunch & Learn session. Also, let us know what issues you want us to work on on your behalf. Thanks for your help. You can hit reply, or contact any of the Executive Board members individually.***

## **\*1. Landmark Supreme Court Case on Global Warming; the Climate at EPA May be Changing....**

Supreme Court Ruling on Heat-Trapping Carbon Dioxide – It is Pollution

and EPA Has the Power to Curb Global Warming Emissions

After a four-year court battle, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled on April 2, 2007 in a 5-4 decision that carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping emissions are “air pollutants” under the Clean Air Act, and that the U.S. government already has authority to start curbing them.

In 2003, EPA ruled that it had no power to curb emissions of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping chemicals. On April 2, 2007 the High Court struck down that ruling in a majority opinion written by Justice John Paul Stevens. Justices Anthony Kennedy, David Souter, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and Stephen Breyer joined the majority opinion. Chief Justice John Roberts filed the dissenting opinion, in which Antonin Scalia, Clarence Thomas, and Samuel Alito joined.

The Supreme Court’s decision comes as Congress is moving into high gear on new legislation to cap and reduce global warming pollution from all major sources across the economy. And major U.S. businesses are supporting limits on heat-trapping emissions. This January, The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) joined General Electric, DuPont, BP and several other businesses and environmental groups in the U.S. Climate Action Partnership, which endorses substantial, enforceable limits on global warming pollution.

The information above was excerpted from an April 2, 2007 press release that was issued by The Natural Resources Defense Council, which is a national, nonprofit organization of scientists, lawyers and environmental specialists dedicated to protecting public health and the environment.

Also on April 2, in a second important Supreme Court case, the Court found that old power plants must control increases in noxious air pollution when these old plants are modified. This

case opens the door for EPA to pursue enforcement cases against power plants that do not comply with the Clean Air Act requirements.

## Senate EPW Hearing on Global Warming

EPA Administrator Steve Johnson testified during the Senate Environment and Public Works full Committee (EPW) hearing on April 24, 2007. The Committee pressed the Administrator for swift action on global warming. The Committee wanted to know how EPA was going to follow the Supreme Court Ruling, and what schedules the Agency had developed. Former Administrators Carol Browner and William Reilly, appearing on a panel before the Committee, emphasized that EPA career staff can do whatever regulatory actions are required very rapidly. The former EPA Administrators reportedly made comments to the effect that professional staff at EPA have been waiting for this opportunity to combat global warming for a long time....

At issue is the approval of a waiver that would allow California and eleven other states to limit global warming pollution from vehicles. The waiver process has begun with a public comment period that closes on June 15, 2007. Several Senators urged the Administrator to fast track the regulatory process. Senator Boxer pledged to call another hearing after the comment period closes to see how long it will take for EPA to act.

Administrator Johnson testified from a 19 page statement that is available from the EPW website. In his testimony, the Administrator recapped a wide variety of EPA climate initiatives, categorizing them by sector: transportation, energy efficiency, energy supply, other industrial sectors, and international efforts. As for the impact of Massachusetts v EPA, the Administrator's testimony says:

What is next? The Supreme Court will send the case back to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. Then the Court of Appeals will most likely issue an order sending the petition back to EPA.

While technically the petition is not back before the Agency, EPA is exploring and studying the issues raised by the Court's decision, including potential ramifications on other provisions of the Clean Air Act. The Agency fully recognizes the decision as one of the most important

environmental law decisions in years –accordingly, we are trying to assure that the Agency is in the best possible position to address its ramifications.

## **\*2. Know the New Hatch Act Interpretation: It Could Save Your Job**

### **“Water Cooler” Exception Rescinded**

#### **WHAT IS THE HATCH ACT?**

The Hatch Act governs political activity of federal employees, and "political activity" is defined as any activity directed toward the success or failure of a political party, candidate for partisan political office, or partisan political group. The Hatch Act is enforced by the Office of Special Counsel (OSC). Most EPA employees fall into the less restricted category, while career SESers are the most restricted and are curtailed in what they can do even outside of the office. Presidentially Appointed and Senate confirmed employees, such as the Administrator, are in a separate category altogether. Most people at EPA (excluding the career SESers) can engage in political activity outside of the workplace.

#### **WHAT CAN'T WE DO?**

Here's a quick synopsis of what most people CANNOT do in the federal workplace: (1) use official authority (which includes title and position) to influence an election; (2) engage in any activity directed toward the success or failure of a political party, candidate or partisan political group; (3) coerce any person, including a subordinate, to participate in political activity; (4) solicit, accept or receive uncompensated individual services from a subordinate for a political purpose; (5) engage in political activity while on duty or in any room or building occupied in the discharge of official duties, or while using a federal vehicle. In addition, NO federal employee can: (1) solicit or accept or receive any political contribution, (2) allow official title to be used in connection with fundraising, or (3) solicit or discourage political participation from anyone doing business with the Agency.

#### **WHAT ABOUT EMAIL?**

OSC has taken a significant step to curtail use of government email to "discuss" political activity with others. The short answer is "don't do it." While the Hatch Act of course permits employees to have personal political opinions, it places limits on how those opinions are expressed in the workplace. OSC recognizes that employees may engage in political discussion around the proverbial water cooler, but they are now very clear that the email is not a permissible substitute for conversation. OSC had once carved out a "water cooler" exception to the general prohibition against sending emails with partisan political messages. That exception has been rescinded. The now-defunct exception had said that a partisan political email to a few friends may sometimes be analogous to permissible political philosophizing around the workplace water cooler, but no longer.

The "water cooler" advisory opinion was withdrawn by OSC after the Merit Systems Protection Board rejected use of the "exception" in several recent disciplinary matters. *One of these cases involved an EPA employee who used his government computer to forward a partisan political email to approximately 30 coworkers.* See Special Counsel v. Wilkinson (12/14/06) at <http://www.mspb.gov> . In the words of the Special Counsel, "[t]he four MSPB decisions send a clear message to the federal community. The Hatch Act prohibits federal employees from sending e-mails that advocate for a political party or candidate for partisan public office while on duty or in a federal building, and engaging in such activity may subject them to disciplinary action, including the loss of their job. No political activity means no political activity, regardless of the specific technology used."

Therefore, OGC-Ethics advises that EPA employees should not use their government computers to send any email that advocates for or against a political party or candidate for partisan public office, or otherwise engages in political activity. OGC-Ethics is also strongly recommending that employees reconsider using the government email to forward political cartoons or jokes. However, OGC-Ethics recognizes that if the email involves an issue that is particularly contentious, such as the war on terror, the Hatch Act does not chill the ability of employees to engage in discourse, either in person or via email. Recently, Ana Galindo-Marrone, chief of the Hatch Act unit at the Office of Special Counsel, explained the rules this way: "E-mails on duty or while in a federal building directed at the success or failure of a candidate, party or political organization are prohibited," she said. "Employees opining on the Iraq war or abortion, even though they may be issues in a hot race, are permitted -- unless they're specifically tied back to a candidate or party."

Finally, here are some examples of the specific activity that was found to be in violation of the Hatch Act. These synopses are taken from the Office of Special Counsel's press release:

a) A federal employee sent an email on duty and in a federal building that was directed toward the success of a candidate for US Congress. The email, sent to 300 individuals, attached an

announcement for a Halloween party for a candidate seeking re-election. The message described the candidate in highly favorable terms and strongly encouraged attendance at the event.

b) One employee sent an email containing a widely-circulated picture of President George W. Bush in front of an American flag with the statement, "I Vote the Bible." The text of the email contained several statements in support of President Bush, a negative statement about Democratic Presidential candidate John Kerry, and a statement urging recipients to "Pass along the 'I Vote the Bible' button."

c) One employee sent an email that contained in the subject line "Why I am supporting John Kerry for President," and presented a letter purportedly written by John Eisenhower, son of former President Eisenhower. The email contained several reasons why the reader should vote for Presidential candidate John Kerry and why the reader should not support the Republican Party.

d) Over a three year period, a federal employee, who was an elected official of the California Green Party, received, read, drafted or sent more than 100 emails through his government computer that were directed toward the success of the Green Party. The extensive emails concerned such politically charged issues as party fundraising opportunities, outreach and recruitment plans, internal drafts of various party platforms, and the planning of a State-wide Green Party political convention.

e) An EPA employee, while on duty and using his government computer in the federal workplace, forwarded a letter from the Democratic National Committee urging its recipients to take immediate action after the Presidential debate in support of Presidential candidate John Kerry.

This information was provided by OGC Ethics. For further information, please feel free to contact Justina Fugh, Senior Counsel for Ethics, at (202) 564-1786, or Peggy Love, DEO of OGC, at (202) 564-1784.

### **\*3. Risk Analysis and Review Public Workshops**



EPA is sponsoring the Standing Committee on Risk Analysis Issues and Reviews. They will plan and conduct a series of public workshops that will serve as a venue for discussion of issues critical to the development and review of objective, realistic, and scientifically based human health risk analyses for selected environmental contaminants. Workshop participants will include members of government, industry, environmental groups, and the academic community who will be invited by the committee to discuss key scientific issues relevant to analyzing the human health risks of specific contaminants. The committee, in consultation with the sponsor, will select the specific scientific issues and contaminants that will be discussed at the workshops.

**Date for first workshop:** May 3-4, 2007

**Topic:** Implications of Receptor-Mediated Events on Dose-Response

**Date for second workshop:** June 5, 2007

**Topic:** Quantitative Approaches to Characterizing Uncertainty in Human Cancer Risk Assessment Based on Bioassay Results

## **\*4. Pandemic Flu Preparation**

### **Work at Home Policy in the Event of Social Distancing – Are We Prepared?**

*Editor's note: Although NTEU has not yet been briefed on EPA's draft pandemic policy, we understand that one aspect of the policy concerns potential building closure scenarios. We understand that the draft policy uses the language building "evacuation" rather than building "closure". The significance of this terminology is that under a building closure, such as the recent flood, all HQ EPA employees were put on administrative leave, and received their regular salaries. Under the proposed building evacuation, employees would be required to show that they worked at home in order to be paid. We'll provide you with specifics once they are shared with us.*

Avian Flu and influenza pandemic, are two examples of events where social distancing will be used to reduce the spread of infection or illness. Previous pandemics have shown that early response of communities to encourage or mandate social distancing does in fact reduce the rate of infection and fatalities. The EPA has been designated as the lead for issues related to drinking water and waste water treatment and management. The EPA has a support role to HHS in the event of a human pandemic. Ensuring that EPA can conduct its mission of protecting human health and the environment is the responsibility of everyone working at EPA.

NTEU Chapter 280 has been discussing employee issues regarding continued work during periods of social distancing with EPA management and has made the following recommendations:

Proposals to ensure success with Social Distancing at EPA:

1. Make laptop computers the default for all EPA employees. In any event where employees need to work at home, the laptop will already have the employee's electronic files and Lotus Notes, and other software needed to work.
2. If the first option is not feasible, help employees to set up their own computer and fax system by providing group discounts through computer companies and help purchases by using payroll deductions for payments.
3. Just as fire drills are practice for the unlikely event of a fire, practice social distancing is needed by having employees who do not normally telecommute/telework practice work at home on a quarterly basis to ensure that this will work when needed.
4. Make innovative work practices a part of manager's critical job elements. The bottom line is for work to be done and not the number of people tied to a job site. The goal should be that all employees are able to conduct their work at an alternative site in the event of a disaster or pandemic event.
5. Have the critical information (ie: databases) to accomplish the work on more than one server/location in the event of overload or failure of servers.
6. Telephone trees or similar devices to communicate with the group in the event of an emergency. This should also be tested out quarterly to ensure that the system works.

Diane Rains/Freshteh Toghrol Laboratory Issues Committee

Vice Presidents NTEU Chapter 280

## **\*5. Your Official Personnel Folder:**

### **Know your Rights under the Privacy Act**

**You can ask for a full copy of your OPF before it's –shipped off-site for scanning**

**By Maureen Kiely, USEPA, Region 8**

**Legislative Advocate, AFGE, local 3607, and active member of the EPA Labor Coalition**

The EPA plans to convert employees' Official Personnel Folders from a paper to an electronic format. Nearly all of the local Unions representing EPA employees have demanded to bargain over this proposal.

Your OPF contains the entire record of your career at EPA, as well as some very personal information, such as your social security number, your spouse's social security number, the designated beneficiaries on your life insurance policy, etc. (For a listing of all the documents that should be in your OPF, scroll to the end of this article.)

A key reason that the Unions have all asked to bargain is that we want to protect EPA employees in two ways:

1. We want make certain that all of the important documents currently in your paper OPF actually make it into the electronic version. Loss of some documents, for instance, could adversely affect your retirement.
2. We also want to make sure that all of your personal information is not stolen during the scanning/digitization process; or once the electronic-OPFs are "launched" on the Agency's intranet.

These labor-management negotiations are still in progress. However, it is possible that within the next month or two, EPA will begin shipping all the Official Personnel Folders to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) contractor in Virginia, to begin the scanning and digitization process.

You have a right under the Privacy Act to see all of the personnel folders that EPA retains for you. This includes your OPF, as well as other folders containing material that should not be in your OPF. (See listing of these items at the end of this article)

You have a right to ask your EPA Office of Human Resources to make a copy of these personnel folders for you.

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Furthermore, if your Human Resources office does not comply with your request, you have the right to file a grievance. The Federal Labor Relations Authority has, in the past, ruled that Privacy Act violations can be enforced through the grievance process.

If you are concerned that important documents in your OPF could be lost during the shipping, scanning and digitization process, we encourage you to ask for a full copy of all of the personnel records that the Agency has on file for you, including your OPF - before it is shipped off-site.

If you decide to make this request, we strongly suggest that you make it in writing, and include the language below. You can either

1. Copy the language below onto a paper form, sign and date it, and personally give it to your Human Resources Office (making a copy for yourself to keep); or
2. Copy the language below into an e-mail text; and send the e-mail to your Human Resources office. If you choose to send an e-mail, remember to send it “return receipt,” so that you have a record of when the e-mail was opened.

**One last important detail:** When you receive the paper copy of your personnel folders, review them quickly and carefully to note any problems, errors, and omissions. Then, contact your Human Resources office to get these problems corrected ASAP.

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**Language to Request Access and a Copy of Your OPF:**

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I am requesting a copy of **all** of the personnel folders on file for me in EPA’s Office of Human Resources, including but not limited to my Official Personnel Folder, as is my right under the Privacy Act (5 United States Code 552a).

Section (d)(1) of the Privacy Act states the following:

“Each agency that maintains a system of records shall upon request by any individual to gain access to his record or to any information pertaining to him which is contained in the system, permit him and upon his request, a person of his own choosing to accompany him, to review the record and have a copy made of all or any portion thereof in a form comprehensible to him, except that the agency may require the individual to furnish a written statement authorizing discussion of that individual's record in the accompanying person's presence.” (emphasis added)

I further request that the OPF copy be made before my original folder is sent off-site for scanning and digitization. Please let me know when you will be able to make this copy for me.

Sincerely, [name and date]

\*\*\*\*\*

**What should be kept in your Official Personnel Folder?**

The US Office of Personnel Management’s Guide to Personnel Recordkeeping identifies the following items to be included in your permanent OPF:

- Applications for Federal employment, with supplemental qualification statements (school transcripts, licenses, qualification statements, etc..)
- Applications to establish eligibility for reinstatement to career-conditional, or other active government status.
- Records that document military service creditable for leave accrual, reduction-in-force, retirement or veterans' preference.
- Proof of selective service registration.
- Statements of prior Federal service (if any); and statements of acceptance or understanding regarding appointment to Senior Executive Service.
- Some Agency award forms.
- Enrollment health benefit registration form, including any authorized attachments. (Medical certificates and documentation should be placed in a sealed envelope before being attached to the enrollment forms, to limit the number of people who see this medical information).
- Premium conversion waiver/election form – Used to elect or waive pretax treatment of employee FEHB premium.
- All life insurance forms.

- Documentation of an individual's retirement coverage.
- Deposits for military service
- Designation of beneficiary(ies) for retirement benefits, including any authorized attachments such as trustee designation.
- Notices of approval of disability retirement application.
- Thrift savings plan information, including the thrift savings plan election form; and the "catch-up" contribution election form.
- Personnel actions, such as grade and pay retention applications, and notifications of personnel actions, and documentation of employee's resignation or retirement.
- Birth certificates.
- Medicare eligibility OPM Form 1528.

**What should NOT be kept in your Official Personnel folder?**

- Alcohol and drug abuse records
- Personnel-related complaints and appeals

- Drug testing records
- Information on wage garnishment
- Self-identification records (or statements) regarding medical disability
- Medical records on employee occupational illnesses, accidents, injuries, exposures, or other medical or health maintenance matters
- Minority group identifiers
- Payroll, leave, financial records
- OPM Form 1635 – welfare to work program

## **\*6. House Committee Investigates IG Lay-offs and Bonus**

The powerful Chairman of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, John Dingell ((D-MI), has sent EPA Administrator Steve Johnson an April 23<sup>rd</sup> letter asking questions about EPA's Inspector General (IG) shop. It appears that acting IG, Bill Roderick "launched" his plan in June to cut 60 of his 360 employees. (Investigative or audit employees of the IG are excluded from the NTEU Chapt. 280 bargaining unit.) Chairman Dingell questions whether the IG shop performed analysis or fact finding to ensure that the IG's functions would not be impaired by the lay offs. There is also apparently some consternation on the Hill concerning Mr. Roderick's telling his employees that a proposed \$5.1 million cut in the IG budget for FY2008 would require employee buyouts to reduce staffing levels – accepted by 12 people. Sources say that Congress is actually unlikely to cut the budget.

Chairman Dingell, in his letter asks, "Is it correct that in the same approximate time frame (December 2006) that you were considering Mr. Roderick's employee buyout package, Mr. Roderick was given a bonus that exceeded \$15,000?"

See Al Kamen's In the Loop column, The Washington Post, April 30, 2007, for more details, including the tidbit that former IG (from 1998 – 2006) Nikki Tinsley, never got a bonus like that, despite all the hard work she did in putting out reports that criticized the agency.



## **\*7. The 2007 Best (and Worst) Places to Work in Government (Bestplacestowork.org)**

The 2007 survey results are out and EPA has dropped in the ratings. The overall index score for employee satisfaction and engagement lists EPA at #9 out of 30 agencies with a score of 65.5, which is down -3.4% from 2005 when it was 67.8%. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is #1 with a 2007 score of 76.2., up 1.9% since the 2005 score of 74.8. The NRC has a strong NTEU chapter, which may help make NRC such a well liked place to work.

Here are some of the more specific ratings. To get ratings of sub-offices and regions – Region 9 is very well liked – go to the website.

Employee Skills/mission match (Employees feel that their skills and talents are used effectively): EPA is #17 with a score of 77.6, down -0.3% from 2005.

Strategic Management: EPA is #16 with a score of 56.2, down 1.4% from 2005.

Teamwork: EPA is #15 with a score of 71, down -0.3% from 2005.

Effective Leadership: EPA is #17 with a score of 50.4, down -2.5% from 2005.

Performance Based Rewards and Advancement: EPA is #6 with a score of 48.7, down -5.6% from 2005.

Training and Development: EPA is #13 with a score of 60.6, down -3.0% from 2005.

Support for Diversity: EPA is #5 with a score of 61.3, down -4.4% from 2005.

Pay and Benefits: EPA is #7 with a score of 69.2.

Family Friendly Culture and Benefits: EPA is #4 with a score of 54.2.

Work/Life Balance: EPA is #11 with a score of 63.1, down -2.8% from 2005.

## **\*8. The Bully Boss**

The new Employment Law Alliance (ELA) Poll was released on March 21, 2007. The results are that nearly 45% of US workers say they've worked for an abusive boss. The percentage of workers who have suffered with the bully boss rise as workers age according to a national survey of 1000 American adults. Detailed interviews were conducted with 534 full or part time workers. The most common behavior that workers identified was making a sarcastic joke at someone's expense, commenting on performance in front of others, rude interruptions, yelling, dirty looks and ignoring a worker. See all the poll results at [www.employmentlawalliance.com](http://www.employmentlawalliance.com).

Stephen Hirschfeld, ELA's CEO, said "the poll results reflect recognition that abusive bosses are more than just an annoyance, but a very real problem and that employees will increasingly demand protection, if not from the employers then the courts." Mr. Hirschfeld notes that the survey comes at a time when nearly one dozen state legislators are considering laws to specifically prohibit bullying in the workplace. An aware employer is a prepared employer when it comes to focusing on preventing incidents and avoiding costly litigation. Of those surveyed, 64% said that they believe an abused worker should have the right to sue to recover damages.

In reacting to the poll results, Dr. Sutton, Professor of Management Science and Engineering, and Co-Director of the Center for Work, Technology, and Organization said, "This national survey adds to the growing mountain of evidence showing that abuse of power is a rampant problem in the American workplace. It is time for senior management to realize that this conduct damages their people and is costing them a fortune. Demeaned workers respond with a reduced commitment and loss of productivity, and they run for the exits to find more humane bosses. And these costs will keep escalating as more victims realize that they can fight back in court."

Mr. Hirschfeld responds, “Only an employer in a state of denial would ignore the poll results and not re-examine their personnel policies, supervisor-employee relations and management training”. “One of our Canadian members, Montreal-based lawyer, Manon Savard from Ogilvy Renault, reports a recent case, still under review, where an employer was ordered to pay \$5,000 as moral damages for inflicting psychological abuse under Quebec's anti-psychological harassment law. That law provides a right to recover damages for “any vexatious behavior” that affects an employee's dignity or psychological or physical integrity”.

*Editor's note: NTEU Chapter 280 is urging management to incorporate annual 360 degree reviews that get evaluated at levels above the office director. The 360 can be a great early warning sign to upper management that a supervisor is a bully or discriminates against classes of employees. As the Administrator seeks new initiatives to strengthen EPA, one of the most vital and important things that can be done is to provide an outlet for confidential staff level evaluation of management. Exposing abusive managers and removing them from supervisory jobs is in the best interests of EPA as well as EPA's employees.*

*Have an EPA bad manager horror story that you want to share? Hit reply and tell me about it.*

## **\*9. Know Your Union Rights (From NTEU)**

You did not give up your basic rights the day you became a federal employee. Many rights are provided by law and additional rights have been negotiated. All are enforced for you daily by NTEU.

Your rights, under both the law and the NTEU/agency contract, are only words on paper until you claim them, assert them, and exercise them. Exercising your rights will transform hopes and aspirations for the future into a positive action program that will make a better tomorrow for federal employees.

You will never be alone in exercising these rights. NTEU--its members, leadership, and staff--stand with you.

The Federal-Labor Management Relations Act defines and protects your rights. As a federal employee, you have the right to:

join NTEU;

actively participate as a member of NTEU;

participate in the decisions affecting your work life;

file grievances through your NTEU representative;

be guaranteed protections in exercising your rights.

**It is against the law for management to take any action against you because of your membership in, support of, or active participation in, NTEU.**

Question and Answers

Do you have the right to have an NTEU representative present in a "formal discussion" between you and management?

YES

Any examination of an employee in the bargaining unit by a representative of the agency in connection with an investigation, including Internal Security or Inspection, entitles you to have an NTEU representative present if you reasonably believe that the examination may result in disciplinary action against you and you request representation.

Do you have the right to file grievances or complaints against the agency without fear of reprisal?

YES

It is illegal for the agency to discipline or otherwise discriminate against you because you have filed a grievance, complaint, or affidavit against the agency or its representatives.

Does the law state that the statutory protection of the right of employees to form, join, and participate in labor unions of their own choosing contributes to the effective conduct of public business?

YES

In addition, Congress has found, and the law thus states, that employees' participation in labor unions also safeguards the public interest and facilitates and encourages the amicable settlements of disputes between employees and the agency involving "conditions of employment."

All of the above are rights afforded to you in accordance with the Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute. NTEU ensures that those rights are protected.

Congress guarantees your right, as a federal employee, to join NTEU. Some managers may not understand the law or have no respect for it. Make it perfectly clear to them that you know what your rights are, and that you plan to assert them.

## **\*10. EPA's Dwindling Science Budget for Ecosystems**

An April 1, 2007 article from Environmental Science & Technology magazine (American Chemical Society), graphs EPA's research budget for ecosystems and extramural Science to Achieve Results (STAR) grant funding. Not too surprising, they are in decline. The president's FY '07 total budget for EPA is \$7.3 billion, declining 4% each year since 2005. EPA's budget for the Office of Research & Development (ORD) in FY'07 is \$557 million, about a 6% decline from the previous year. EPA is tasked with protecting not just human health but the health of the environment, yet ecosystems research is now at less than 15% of the ORD budget and about 1.1% of the total EPA budget. "EPA is abdicating ecosystems research as a priority –it is in danger of becoming the *Human Health* Protection Agency, rather than the Environmental Protection Agency."

## **\*11. Emerging Leaders Network**

NTEU Chapter 280 Board members met with Noha Gaber and Scott Fraser, founders of the Emerging Leaders Network at EPA. This year old grassroots organization was founded by Ms. Gaber and Mr. Fraser primarily as a way to network outside of AAships. They sponsor social events, seminars and workshops. The “Network” is open to all EPA employees. To join email [eeln@epa.gov](mailto:eeln@epa.gov).