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Inside The Fishbowl

Official Newsletter of NTEU 280

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Link to NTEU Membership Form:

https://www.opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/sf1187.pdf

***1. *Fishbowl Flash: PARS Anxieties?* by Bill Evans**

Anxieties about Your Up-Coming Performance Appraisal and Recognition System (PARS) Agreement?

We thought the following background information might be useful as you prepare your PARS performance plans for the up-coming year. Although NTEU is still engaged in negotiations with the EPA Labor Relations staff with regard to linking PARS with awards, management has decided to proceed with training during the month of December to have the PARS in place for 2008.

What you should know is that the training modules are not consistent throughout the various AAships. Some opt to train managers and employees together while others train the managers separately from the employees. In the AAships which offer managers separate training from

employees, the management sessions are generally longer and more detailed, presumably dealing with issues such as employee discipline and evaluation procedures.

In addition, the materials handed out at employee meetings have been tailored to the particular AAship's needs and perspectives and differ from one to another. We encourage you to attend the training provided by your AAship. We at NTEU have attended many of these sessions in various AAships, however, it has not been possible for us to attend them all. So, we thought it would be prudent to give you some points to consider as you begin to sit down with your supervisor and prepare your performance plan. These points are listed below.

POINTS TO CONSIDER ABOUT YOUR PARS AGREEMENT

- PARS was forced on all government agencies as part of the President's Management Agenda, and it is being implemented by OPM. There was very little for the Unions to negotiate on this system, and no one seems to be happy with it, including the managers. Before PARS, EPA had a pass/fail system of evaluation in which award money was specifically de-linked.
- A revised agreement has been signed by NTEU negotiators, but can not yet be released until OGC clears it. There are some wording issues on a couple of clauses, and when these are completed we will distribute the new agreement to the members of our Bargaining Unit.
- **Always write plenty of assumptions** for factors in a Critical Job Element (CJE) for which you have no control over and may have an impact on your rating.
- Request to review your supervisor's performance plan for purposes of establishing your own, since your plan is based on a "cascading of goals."
- Individual Development Plans (IDPs) are required only if you request one. We highly recommend that you develop an IDP. An IDP identifies developmental needs and career objectives. This process can include conducting your own self-assessment, obtaining assessments from others, and most importantly, identifying opportunities for career growth.

The IDP can be your ticket to specialized training and career enhancement. Your supervisor is required to have at least an annual discussion with you concerning your career goals and individual development needs.

- It is at the discretion of the manager if an employee is allowed to have a Union representative present when a PAP (Performance Assistance Plan) has been initiated. However, an employee may seek (and we highly recommend this) assistance from a Union representative outside of the PAP process. If a PIP (Performance Improvement Plan) is initiated, an employee is entitled to Union representation.
- If you are placed on a PAP or a PIP, contact the Union immediately, so we can review your plans and assist you.
- Always communicate early and often with your supervisor, and if you choose, ask for a Union representative to sit in even if only to witness.
- If you have any questions or concerns at any turn in the process, contact your Union.
- We are continuing our efforts to convince OARM to implement an agency-wide evaluation of management, similar to the anonymous 360 reviews that have periodically been done in some offices.

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***2. NTEU Chapt. 280 Executive Board Opening Filled**

We are pleased to announce that the Vice President vacancy on the Executive Board has been filled by Amer Al-Mudallal, an Environmental Scientist in the Registration Division of the Office of Pesticide Programs. Thanks to all of the applicants for applying.