

# NTEU TSA UPDATE

*News and Information for TSA Employees from NTEU*

**May 21, 2009**

## **Capitol Hill News**

### **NTEU Welcomes House Vote to Protect TSOs**

At NTEU's urging, the House Rules Committee has voted to allow an amendment to the 2010 TSA Authorization bill that would allow TSA employees to voluntarily wear personal protective equipment, such as N-95 facial masks, in the event of an emergency such as the recent swine flu outbreak.

NTEU President Colleen M. Kelley sent a [letter](#) to House Rules Committee Chair Louise Slaughter (D-N.Y.) in support of the amendment. "NTEU has been in many discussions with components of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in an attempt to make sure that DHS employees have clear guidelines and are able to protect themselves during emergencies such as the swine flu epidemic," Kelley said. "Unfortunately, no coherent policy has emerged. [This amendment] will at least aid our TSA employees by allowing them to take action to protect themselves and their families, when necessary."

The TSA authorization bill, H.R. 2200, is currently pending a vote before the full House, and the amendment will be offered by Rep. Stephen Lynch (D-Mass.). Rep. Lynch is chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on the Federal Workforce that held a hearing on this issue last week. President Kelley's [testimony](#) at that hearing helped convince Rep. Lynch to offer this amendment.

## **News Alert**

### **Swine Flu Fight Garner National Media Attention**

Last week, several print media outlets documented President Kelley's testimony before the House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on the Federal Workforce, in which the NTEU leader continued her sharp criticism of DHS for its failure to provide a rational policy regarding the use of protective masks by frontline homeland security employees during the recent swine flu scare.



A May 14 *Washington Post* article, [Lawmakers Blast DHS Swine Flu Policy](#), reported that "Lawmakers blasted the Department of Homeland Security today for not formalizing the use of protective face masks by employees working along the U.S.-Mexico border during the recent swine flu outbreak, suggesting the department has placed bureaucratic considerations ahead of the health and safety of its own workers." The article quoted President Kelley saying, "It is unacceptable and shocking that more than three weeks after the onset of the so-called

swine flu and despite repeated urging from NTEU and others, there is still no comprehensive guidance in place to protect the health of these frontline employees."

A *GovExec* article [Lawmaker threatens to force DHS to let employees wear masks](#), on May 14 also highlighted the ongoing fight to obtain a clear written policy from DHS leaders. The article reported that "DHS' current policy — which requires workers who come in close contact with an infected person to wear face masks, but otherwise doesn't explicitly allow or prohibit them — has drawn the ire of the National Treasury Employees Union ... which claim[s] that thousands of passenger screeners and others on the border have been ordered to remove masks by their managers."

A May 15 article [Protective Masks Continue to Cause Stir](#), by the San Diego-based *North County Times*, quoted President Kelley saying the union has received numerous complaints from workers whose supervisors have told them not to wear the masks. "Some of (the complaints) are disturbingly threatening, and some include comments indicating the reason for the prohibition was fear of alarming the public," Kelley said.

For more news about NTEU's fight against the swine flu threat, visit [www.nteu.org](http://www.nteu.org).

### ***Making a Difference***

## **NTEU Succeeds for Working TSOs**

NTEU continues to see success in its representation of airport TSOs nationwide.

At **Lambert-St. Louis International Airport**, NTEU successfully urged management to rescind a written reprimand issued to a TSO who allegedly violated the agency's union guidance by handing out union materials in an airport break room. After the TSO contacted an NTEU staff attorney for timely representation, management notified the union that it would rescind the reprimand and provide clear guidance regarding permitted union activities, official work duties and designated airport break areas.

**"Without NTEU  
representing us, TSA  
would not treat us  
fairly."**

*TSO, El Paso  
International Airport*

And, at **El Paso International Airport** in Texas, an NTEU Chapter 314 (TSA El Paso) member was recently returned to work when the union successfully fought for his reinstatement after weeks of agency delay. The agency had placed the TSO on mandatory leave and refused all requests for reinstatement, despite the TSO obtaining medical clearance to return to work and perform regular duties. As soon as NTEU intervened on the TSO's behalf and filed a grievance, the agency backed off, reinstated the employee and restored more than four weeks of personal leave.



Lambert-St. Louis International Airport

"Before NTEU, management would do whatever they wanted to do to us," said the TSO, an eight-year TSA employee. "Without NTEU representing us, TSA would not treat us fairly."

Another NTEU-represented TSO at **Tampa International Airport** was helped by the union after the employee's job was threatened by management in a dispute over paperwork for a performance award. The TSO contacted an NTEU staff attorney, who pointed out the employee's exemplary performance record to airport management and successfully urged them to reconsider their decision and reinstate the TSO.

**NTEU is ready and willing to help.**  
**If you have questions, call toll free**  
**1-866-591-5735 or e-mail [TSA@nteu.org](mailto:TSA@nteu.org).**



***Please spread the word about***  
***NTEU's TSA Update.***

**It's free and keeps TSOs informed about important issues.**

If you've received this from a friend or colleague, [sign up for your own copy](#).

NTEU's Mission: To organize federal employees to work together to ensure that every federal employee is treated with dignity and respect.

The *NTEU TSA Update* is a periodic electronic newsletter published by the National Treasury Employees Union for TSA employees. To subscribe or change your e-mail preferences, [visit the NTEU TSA Update subscription page](#).

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