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**House of Representatives**  
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**For Immediate Release**  
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**Chairman Danny K. Davis and Chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz**  
**Praise Settlement Allowing GAO Employees to Vote on Unionization**

Today, House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Danny K. Davis and House Appropriations Legislative Branch Subcommittee Chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz expressed their satisfaction with the resolution to a unionization dispute at the Government Accountability Office, GAO.

“When mutual respect and understanding of the rights of others exist, progress is inevitable. Therefore, I am pleased that the GAO Management and employees have reached an accord which will lead to an election which protects the rights of workers to organize.” said Chairman Davis. “GAO employees provide critical services to the Congress and the public by conducting complex analyses of programs at other federal agencies on behalf of Congress and the American taxpayer.”

The announced settlement, allows all permanent and probationary Band I, IIA and IIB employees to vote on whether or not they would like to unionize. The election process will be completed on September 19, 2007.

“It is our sincere hope that over the coming weeks leading up to the union election, GAO management will move forward to complete the election process cooperatively and with respect for GAO employees’ right to unionize,” said Chairwoman Wasserman Schultz. “I am pleased that the two sides were able to come together and work out a process that respects the rights of the GAO employees, while continuing the essential services GAO provides for the federal government.”

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## **LEADING THE NEWS**

### **Officials set GAO union-organizing election date**

**By Kelly McCormack**

**July 19, 2007**

The Government Accountability Office and union representatives have agreed that a union-organizing election would be held Sept. 19.

If employees approve the union it would be the first guild in the agency's 86-year history. GAO management and union officials have been at odds for the last few months over the specifics of the bargaining unit for the election. But at a meeting held before a Personnel Appeals Board (PAB) judge Wednesday, they agreed that all permanent and probationary Band I, Band IIA and Band IIB employees would be included in one group.

All voters would respond to one question: "Do you want to be represented by the GAO Employees Organization, IFPTE?" a newsletter for GAO analysts said.

GAO employees working in the Washington headquarters will vote by manual ballot, and field-office employees, working nationwide, will vote by mail ballot.

Gregory Junemann, president of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE), the union organizing the election, welcomed the agreement.

"IFPTE is grateful for the diligent efforts of all the people who had a hand in bringing this agreement about, and we look forward to continued mutual cooperation as we move forward to complete the election process," Junemann said in a statement.

U.S. Comptroller General David Walker, head of the GAO, was also content with the ultimate agreement.

"I am very pleased that we have been able to reach an agreement with IFPTE that will result in a timely election," Walker said in a statement. "As I have consistently said, GAO recognizes and supports the right of GAO employees to organize if they choose to do so."

A GAO employee noted that the agreement "parallels what's done elsewhere" in the federal government, with probationary employees being included in a union election. "We want a quick election," the employee said. "And no more delay tactics by

management.”

In order to establish a union at the agency, a majority of the employees who vote will have to affirm the union — not the majority of the bargaining unit, the employee explained, noting that the distinction would be likely to help the union’s case because most people are supportive of the union.

In May, more than half of the agency’s 1,500 analysts signed a petition to hold a union-organizing election. Union officials expected the election to take place sometime this summer, but GAO and IFPTE officials have argued about the eligibility of Band IIB analysts, who the agency has said are ineligible for representation because they are supervisors. Band IIB employees earn more money than those in Band IIA.

In connection with the settlement, the parties also agreed to withdraw an unfair-labor-practice charge.

Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.), chairwoman of the Appropriations Committee’s legislative branch panel, had two separate meetings Tuesday with union officials and Walker.

## **GAO, union reach agreement on union vote**

By [M.Z. HEMINGWAY](#)

July 19, 2007

More than 1,800 Government Accountability Office analysts will vote Sept. 19 on whether to join a union. After weeks of haggling over who is eligible to vote, GAO management and the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers agreed to let all GAO analysts vote, including newly employed analysts who are still in probationary status.

The potential bargaining unit of more than 1,800 is significantly larger than the 1,400 or so the union initially filed for in May when it formally sought a vote.

GAO management had challenged whether a third of the analysts were eligible, arguing they serve in supervisory roles. Managers also had argued to allow newly employed analysts vote. The two sides reached a compromise July 18 on who would be eligible to vote.

"As I have consistently said, GAO recognizes and supports the right of GAO employees to organize if they choose to do so," Comptroller General David Walker said in a statement announcing the compromise.

Election results should be known by Sept. 20.

As part of the deal, the union will withdraw an unfair labor practice charge against Walker. The union complained he'd failed to remain impartial during the unionization effort.

Many employees said they sought a union vote because they wanted more say in pay and personnel changes at the agency. GAO began paying employees based on their performance in 1998. And in 2004, it transitioned to market-based pay scales, which caused some analysts' pay to be capped at a lower level.

## GAO, union reach agreement to hold election

By Brittany R. Ballenstedt [bballenstedt@govexec.com](mailto:bballenstedt@govexec.com) July 19, 2007

The Government Accountability Office has resolved a disagreement with a federal labor union over the eligibility of certain employees to organize, paving the way for a union election process to be completed in September.

Under the agreement, reached Wednesday with the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers, all permanent and probationary employees in Band I, Band IIA and Band IIB of GAO's paybanding system will be eligible to vote, the agency and IFPTE announced in a joint statement. Voting will end on Sept. 19.

The results will determine whether 1,500 analysts at GAO will have union representation. The election will mark the first time GAO employees have voted on the issue in the watchdog agency's 86-year history.

"I am very pleased that we have been able to reach an agreement with IFPTE that will result in a timely election," Comptroller General David M. Walker said in a statement. "As I have consistently said, GAO recognizes and supports the right of GAO employees to organize if they choose to do so."

The election announcement marks a strong reversal from earlier this month, when IFPTE General Counsel Julie Clark indicated that under a [proposed timeline](#), an election at the agency would happen no earlier than October, if at all.

GAO managers and the union have spent weeks trying to resolve disputes about the potential makeup of the bargaining unit, largely because of challenges brought by GAO that analysts in Band IIB hold supervisory roles that would make them ineligible to join a union.

IFPTE Secretary-Treasury Paul Shearon said Thursday that GAO leaders approached the union last week, questioning whether Band IIB analysts could be represented by a separate union. "That provided the option of discussing how we approach getting these employees to vote with the party of their peers," Shearon said.

The discussions allowed the two sides to reach a compromise Wednesday, allowing all permanent and probationary Band IIB employees to participate in the IFPTE election. As part of the agreement, the union agreed to withdraw an [unfair labor practice charge](#) filed against Walker late last month.

Headquarters employees will vote by manual ballot, and field office employees will vote by mail. Ballots will be counted immediately after the voting process ends, Shearon said. After the election is complete, GAO management will have five days to allege a violation of the election rules. But if employees choose in favor of the union, certification is immediate. GAO's union would be an IFPTE local, and after certification, employees who join could begin electing officers and negotiating a contract, Shearon said.

The push to unionize is partly a response to a new personnel system at GAO, under which 308 senior analysts did not receive pay raises last year. IFPTE has said that most employees have cited what they consider to be a lack of transparency in pay for performance as a major driver of the organizing campaign.

Unlike most federal agencies, in which managers are not responsible for setting pay,

bargaining over wages would be possible at GAO because of management's broad authority over compensation.

GAO's Personnel Appeals Board will oversee the election process and is expected to issue a formal election agreement in the coming days.

"IFPTE is grateful for the diligent efforts of all the people who had a hand in bringing this agreement about," said IFPTE President Greg Junemann, "and we look forward to continued mutual cooperation as we move forward to complete the election process."

[VIEW ALL COMMENTS](#) [POST COMMENT](#)

#### COMMENTS

- I find it less than honest that after Mr. Walker backed down from an unfair labor practice charge, thereby letting the Band IIB employees vote in the union election, that he issued the statement you quoted: "As I have consistently said, GAO recognizes and supports the right of GAO employees to organize if they choose to do so." It appears he only recognizes that right when he is forced to do so through the legal system. He certainly isn't consistent with his views and statements. The other item is one of union eligibility - you have reported 1,500 analysts will vote on the union representation where as the Washington Post reported today "about 1,800 GAO analysts". The exact number is not the issue, it is somewhere between 1500 and 1800, but what about the other GAO employees? According to a GAO posting, the number of employees in 2006 was 3,260. So that leaves between 1460 and 1760 employees who are not eligible to vote so must be in fact supervisors according to Mr. Walker. However, any reasonable person would question there are that many bone fide supervisors at the GAO who have signature authority for signing leave slips and performance ratings. Mr. Walker would be claiming his organization has a employee to supervisor ratio somewhere between 0.85 and 1.23. Even a simpleton knows that ratio is not valid so what is Mr. Walker hiding? Is he still being consistent by giving all GAO workers the right to decide for themselves about the union or he is still excluding some that are eligible? Fess up Mr. Walker - where is the "Integrity" you profess for your office? Are you redefining the government definition of "supervisor" for your own use to make your case? Bill Posted July 20, 2007 9:51 AM
  - In my opinion, the union option is an out growth of problems caused by the nature of GAO's work versus employees desires to earn more money and responsibility. GAO's work should be supported by large percentage of Band I employees and significantly smaller percentages of Band II and III employees. The GAO work force, however, is a highly educated group that strives for more earnings and responsibility. Vincent Forte Posted July 19, 2007 8:20 PM
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July 19, 2007, 7:05 pm

## Watchdog Solidarity

*Gary Fields reports on organizing the GAO.*

Union organizers and Government Accountability Office Comptroller **General David Walker** have reached an agreement that will allow hundreds of employees to vote in September on whether they will join the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers.

The sides had [disagreed for months](#) over who was eligible, leading organizers to file an unfair labor practice grievance. That claim will be withdrawn. “As I have consistently said, GAO recognizes and supports the right of GAO employees to organize if they choose to do so,” Walker said in a joint statement with the union.

## Union Election Set at GAO

By Stephen Barr  
Friday, July 20, 2007; D04

A union election will be held at the [Government Accountability Office](#) on Sept. 19, the GAO and the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers announced.

About 1,800 GAO analysts will be eligible to vote on whether to form a union. According to the joint statement, permanent and probationary employees in bands I, IIA and IIB will be able to vote. GAO, a congressional agency, sets salaries based on the bands.

The push for unionization at GAO began after numerous analysts complained about the fairness of a 2005-06 restructuring of compensation practices. The union filed a petition in May at GAO calling for the representation election.



## **GAO, union agree on representation election**

**BY Richard W. Walker**

**Published on July 19, 2007** The Government Accountability Office and the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE), a trade union, announced July 18 that they have reached agreement providing for a union-representation election Sept. 19.

The accord resolves a point of contention between GAO and the union about the eligibility to vote in an election of 461 analysts in Band II B of GAO's pay-banding system. GAO officials had argued that those employees are supervisors and therefore ineligible for union representation. However, GAO said July 18 that all permanent and probationary Band I, II A and II B employees will be eligible to vote in the election.

The election process will be conducted by GAO's Personnel Appeals Board, which will issue the formal election agreement in the near future, GAO said.

In a statement, Comptroller General David Walker, head of GAO, said he was pleased with "an agreement with IFPTE that will result in a timely election. As I have consistently said, GAO recognizes and supports the right of GAO employees to organize if they choose to do so."

"IFPTE is grateful for the diligent efforts of all the people who had a hand in bringing this agreement about, and we look forward to continued mutual cooperation as we move forward to complete the election process," Union President Gregory Junemann said.

GAO said the parties also have reached an agreement in principle that will lead to withdrawal of an unfair labor practice complaint issued in June against GAO by the union.

On May 8 IFPTE filed a petition seeking to form a union after more than half of GAO's 1,500 analysts signed cards requesting a vote for unionization.

In voting to support a union election, GAO analysts voiced concern about a

variety of employee issues, many relating to the agency's pay-for-performance system, which was implemented in 2004.