



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF
PROFESSIONAL & TECHNICAL ENGINEERS
AFL-CIO & CLC

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GAO ANALYSTS GO UNION

Workers at Congress' Watchdog Agency Vote by Better Than 2 to 1 Margin, 897 to 445, to be Represented by IFPTE in First-Ever Union Election at the Government Accountability Office

WASHINGTON – A solid majority of the analysts at both the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) Washington headquarters and those scattered at 11 field offices across the country have voted to be represented by a union, the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE). Analysts voted 897 to 445 for IFPTE. This is the first time in GAO's 86-year history that the agency's analysts have voted for union representation.

"We're ecstatic!" said Jacqueline Harpp a senior analyst and one of the union's four official election observers at Wednesday night's vote count. "Our slogan for this campaign was 'band together' and that's exactly what we did. Over the past 18 months we came together regardless of pay band, years of service, and whether we worked in D.C. or the field. This vote reflects that spirit of unity."

The next steps will be to elect a council, write a constitution, determine bargaining priorities and then sit down with management to negotiate a first contract. "We're going to do everything we can to assist our new members at GAO," said IFPTE President Greg Junemann, "but the involvement of the national union will likely be limited. The analysts at GAO are experts at creating efficient organizations. You can bet that their bargaining surveys and their research will be data driven. This local union will be an example for other labor groups."

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Lise Levie another analyst observing the vote count said, “We’re looking forward to a great working relationship with Comptroller General David Walker. The union will help us to make GAO a true model agency.”

Two years ago, the agency made sweeping changes in personnel policies, dividing analysts into salary “bands,” eliminating cost-of-living increases for many, labeling some workers as “over market” and reducing their salaries. In response, union activists gathered authorization cards over the past year and a half from hundreds of employees, held regular meetings at a downtown church, produced online video messages and used personal vacation time to travel to field offices to campaign for the union.

IFPTE Secretary-Treasurer Paul Shearon who heads up the union’s organizing efforts said, “Initially this organizing drive was a reaction to poorly thought-out and divisive pay and personnel policies but over time this campaign evolved into much more. The analysts at GAO are very proud of the work they do and the majority sent a message today that the union is a vehicle to move the agency forward and do its important work better.”

In the spring of 2006 a group of analysts approached the 63,000-member International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE) for assistance in forming a union. IFPTE has represented GAO’s sister agency the Congressional Research Service (CRS) for more than 20 years. IFPTE also represents other highly skilled federal workers including NASA scientists and federal judges.

GAO, an independent agency, has its own labor law and its own labor board, the Personnel Appeals Board (PAB), to run union elections. The election was conducted by mail ballot in the field offices and on site in the Washington headquarters. There were 1,813 employees eligible to vote.