



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF  
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**WATCHING THE WATCHDOG**

**Majority of GAO Analysts File Union Election Authorization Cards  
Paving the Way for First-ever Union Election at Government Accountability Office**

**WASHINGTON** – A majority of the 1,500 analysts employed at the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) Washington headquarters and field offices across the country today filed authorization cards with the GAO Personnel Appeals Board calling for a union representation election. The groundbreaking election, likely to take place in late spring or early summer, will mark the first union election ever to be held at Congress' investigative agency, which was created in 1921.

“Analysts at the agency devote their careers to speaking out about improving government, yet at their own agency their voices have been muted,” said IFPTE President Greg Junemann. “In recent months problems with a reclassification system have hurt the team mentality that has made the agency successful in the past. Morale has suffered and the agency's management has unfairly eliminated cost-of-living increases for many GAO employees and frozen the salaries of others.”

Two years ago, the agency made sweeping changes in personnel policies, dividing workers in salary “bands,” eliminating cost-of-living increases for many, labeling some workers as “over market” and reducing their salaries. Many of the unilateral changes made at GAO are similar to personnel policies that have been challenged at the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security by unions including the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE).

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The campaign slogan for union activists at GAO is “Band Together.” In recent weeks, many GAO employees have placed red, white, and blue placards on their office walls and windows with these words as a sign of unity. Over the past year, GAO employees have gathered authorization cards from hundreds of their colleagues, held regular meetings at a downtown church, and used personal vacation time to visit with colleagues employed at field offices in preparation for today’s filing.

“In its advice to other agencies, GAO encourages meaningful employee involvement as a critical element of successful personal management change,” stated Senior Analyst John Vocino. “It is time we led by example here at GAO. There is no question that many of management’s recent missteps could have been avoided had employees been union-represented during the planning, adoption, and implementation of personnel management changes.” Gay Hee Lee, who has worked at the agency the last five years, adds, “I believe GAO’s pay and performance system could benefit from the input of its employees. It would make the system more transparent and objective and would make us as employees more accountable because we would have an active part in its implementation. We make a living trying to make other federal agencies better. It’s time we did the same thing at GAO. I believe a union can help us achieve this goal.”

In the spring of 2006 a group of analysts approached IFPTE for assistance in forming a union. IFPTE has represented GAO’s sister agency the Congressional Research Service (CRS) for more than 20 years. The union also represents other highly skilled federal workers including NASA and Department of Defense scientists and engineers and federal administrative and immigration judges. In addition to reaching out to those employed at GAO’s Washington headquarters, the union has successfully launched organizing drives at GAO field offices in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Dayton, Denver, Huntsville, Los Angeles, Norfolk, San Francisco and Seattle.

Dallas-based Senior Analyst Eric Essig said, “Some of what GAO employees need from union representation are the same procedural protections other federal employees enjoy. In the field especially we need transfer rights, protections in the event of office closures or reductions-in-force,

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and all GAO employees would benefit from an effective, impartial means of resolving employee complaints, without resorting to litigation. Most federal employees have these protections. It only makes sense for GAO employees to have them too.”

GAO, an independent agency, has its own labor law and its own board to run union elections. GAO’s Personnel Appeals Board (PAB) will likely schedule an election to be held within the next 90 days.

Members of Congress have asked that the election be held in a fair and timely manner and without interference from GAO’s management. “I believe that it will be important for Congress to serve as a watchdog in coming weeks to make sure that GAO’s management does not interfere in this unprecedented vote in any way nor try to delay the election process,” said Rep. Albert Wynn (D-MD).

Rep. John Lewis (D-GA) and 19 other members of Congress had written a letter to Comptroller General David Walker earlier this year requesting that the agency deal with its personnel in a fair manner. In a statement released today Lewis said, “Members of Congress will be watching this process carefully with the confidence that the highest standards of leadership will be employed by GAO, insuring the security and integrity of the voting process, without intimidation or interference from federal managers.”

Across the nation, IFPTE represents 65,000 highly-skilled, white-collar workers in both the public and private sectors. IFPTE is the fastest growing union in the United States. The union is an affiliate of the AFL-CIO.