

# GODDARD ENGINEERS, SCIENTISTS AND TECHNICIANS ASSOCIATION

IFPTE Local 29

*The Voice of Goddard Federal Professional Employees*



## Accomplishments & News

GESTA members and leaders worked hard to bring an end to the recent government shutdown and keep employees and the public informed about its effects. Due in part to their efforts, the final appropriations bill included not only back pay, but an across-the-board General Schedule increase. **Greenbelt employees received a pay raise of 2.29% including the locality adjustment.**

GESTA mourns the loss of Walter Flournoy, one of our founding members, who passed away on April 20<sup>th</sup> at the age of 87. Walter was one of the founding members of the Goddard Engineers, Scientists, and Technicians Association (GESTA/IFPTE Local 29) at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC). Walter was a GESTA officer and leader for most of the union's history, serving as Executive Vice President and as President. **Walter spent his life fighting injustice and helping people, and he achieved some incredible and notable victories.** Walter's skill, experience, toughness, courage, and wisdom impressed those who knew him well and inspired those who worked with him. You can read more about his remarkable life in his obituary at <https://www.snowdencares.com/notices/Walter-Flournoy>.

## President's Corner

by Anel Flores

During the 35-day Federal Government shutdown this past winter, **GESTA was active in helping to keep the pressure on the administration to reopen the government, and to help our employees.** During the shutdown, GESTA communicated with the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE), our affiliate, almost every day. Due to our proximity to Washington, D.C. we were able to meet with Senators Cardin and Van Hollen during the shutdown. The Senators invited me to a teleconference with union officials and the press, which I participated in. Additionally, I invited another GESTA officer to participate with me in roundtables in Maryland with the Senators, other union officials, Federal employees, and the press.

Another GESTA officer and myself had numerous interviews with many news outlets during the shutdown, which you can view on our website at <http://www.gesta-goddard.org/news.html>. Some of the new outlets included the Washington Post, CNN, the Baltimore Sun, and local television stations in the metropolitan region. **In my meetings with Senator Van Hollen and Senator Cardin, I asked them if they could support a bill for back pay for our Federal employees including restoration of annual leave and they said they would. The U.S. Congress passed this bill and the President signed it on or about January 25, 2019.** Additionally, during the shutdown, I wrote numerous letters to congressional leaders and I asked them to compromise with the President over the "Wall" funding, but to obtain concessions, such as a 2019 cost of living increase for Federal employees. The U.S Congress passed the wall funding and I was pleasantly surprised that a 2019 cost of living increase, retroactive to January 1, 2019, was included in the bill. The President signed this bill on or about February 15, 2019. Consequently, **the vast**

**majority of our bargaining unit employees received from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars in back pay and a cost of living increase, depending on their salary. Although, the cost of living increase averages 1.9%, Federal employees in the Washington, D.C. region received a 2.3% cost of living increase for 2019.**

Finally, during the shutdown I counseled employees who were having financial difficulties in paying their bills. The NASA Federal Credit Union also offered 0% percent interest for the first two months for a loan to help employees get through the shutdown. A few employees applied for unemployment insurance, but that has to be paid back since the Federal government reimbursed employees for their back pay. **I have lived through several Federal government shutdowns during my career at NASA and while there may be more to come; they have never made any sense to me. A shutdown is no way to treat our dedicated Federal employees, who are our greatest asset.**

## Membership

We need your support as a member to continue our successful collaboration with management and legislators in improving our careers, GSFC, and NASA's mission. If you are currently an federal employee at Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC), simply fill out and return our Membership Application and Dues Deduction forms (<http://www.gesta-goddard.org/join.html>) to become a member.