

## **President's Corner**

Dear Bargaining Unit Employee (BUE),

I hope that everyone has had a great Labor Day weekend and that you have also taken some time to reflect on what Labor Day really means in America. For me Labor Day represents a day of remembrance of workers who have struggled and some who have died for worker's rights, dignity and reasonable working conditions. Internationally, worker's day, or May Day, is celebrated on May 1<sup>st</sup>. Personally, I am extremely grateful to all of the men and woman who have come before us to improve our quality of life by working so hard to improve our working conditions. I think we generally tend to take for granted many of the improvements that have been made in our working conditions by unions, and yet there is so much more to be done. For Federal Government workers there tends to be too much vitriol by politicians who not only want smaller government, but they want to reduce the pay, benefits and to worsen the working conditions of our employees. I can understand the need for the right size or appropriate size of government; although, consider there are now about 318.9 million people in the United States.

There are almost two dozen bills in the U.S. Congress against Federal employees. Some of the bills propose even more reductions in salary even though we have been undergoing what amounts to a more than 10% reduction in pay (consider the three years of zero cost of living increases and the 1% cost of living increase last year and this year). Next year the Federal employee cost of living increase proposed by the President is only 1.3%, unless the U.S. Congress intervenes, which is considered unlikely. Some new Congressional members want to reduce the number of Federal employees by 5% or 10%, but has anyone told them we are still under a 5% reduction in the NASA workforce, through September 30, 2015? I really wonder if some Congressional leaders know or understand what we have been subjected to. Several years ago NASA agreed to a reduction in its workforce through fiscal year 2015, and that reduction occurs through attrition; i.e., as employees retire some of those employees' positions are eliminated. Although, what is really happening is that many employees have to take on extra work as many of those positions are eliminated.

Unfortunately, the OPM data breach is really much worse than we were initially told, i.e., that perhaps ~4.2 million Federal employees were affected. It turns out that perhaps as many as ~21.5 million employees may have been affected by the data breach which is a disgrace considering that OPM and Federal government officials knew about potential breaches; data breaches throughout Federal Agencies had already occurred; the capabilities existed to protect employees' personally identifiable information (PII), and yet OPM utterly failed to protect employees' PII.

Indeed, two years ago from this coming October a NASA Protective Services Manager had his/her laptop stolen from his/her car in Washington, D.C. in a smash-and-grab robbery. Most city folks know better than to leave any valuables in their cars in plain sight. After this embarrassment NASA moved immediately to have its employees' computers encrypted; although, at the time the Agency

was already behind schedule to have its computers as well as ACES computers encrypted. Thank goodness there have been no reports of any major identity thefts linked to that stolen computer.

I have personally signed up for the CSID credit monitoring services offered by OPM. You have to enter your Social Security number to set up the CSID account and the code provided by CSID, and then your Social Security number automatically gets monitored after you set up the account. You can also have a few bank and credit card accounts monitored, but I chose to only have my home telephone number and private e-mail address monitored in addition to my Social Security number. My thought was that if CSID gets hacked there is no point in having all of my financial information eggs in one basket, and the information I agreed to monitor was information presumably already stolen. Sadly, OPM botched the notice to NASA employees about credit monitoring since it had CSID send the e-mail notice to employees, which appeared to be a phishing scheme, as opposed to having the notice sent directly from either OPM or NASA. NASA did quickly follow up the next day with an e-mail notice to employees that CSID's e-mail was, in fact, legitimate. The CSID notice was also problematic since it included a link to the CSID web site and NASA IT training instructs employees not to click on hyperlinks in e-mails (which is a good practice). Yet, NASA continues to send some of its own e-mails with hyperlinks. The best practice is to not to click on any e-mails' hyperlink(s) and instead to go directly to web site and find the appropriate page directly or copy and paste the link onto your Brower.

Unions including IFPTE (GESTA's parent organization) have asked our Congressional leaders to provide lifetime credit monitoring services to our federal employees from the 18 months now offered, and to provide identify theft insurance up to \$3 Million instead of the \$1 Million being offered. NASA employees also get \$1 Million identity theft insurance, whether or not you sign up for CSID's credit monitoring service. Thus far there is no indication that stolen PII OPM data is being used for identify theft; although, once the data has been breached we cannot be complacent about how the data will be used for now or in the future.

As the Presidential election season is upon us please be aware of the Hatch Act; which limits how Federal Employees can get involved in elections, campaigns, and we cannot campaign at work for any candidate. Also, please be advised that GESTA does *not* contribute money to any candidates' campaign funds. Rather GESTA periodically visits our Congressional leaders regarding NASA's funding, Agency policies, and matters and issues directly related to our bargaining unit employees.

For the second year in a row GSFC Management officials refuse to provide GESTA with the Employee Performance Communication System (EPCS) statistical data in accordance with our Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). Management claims that since a group of Employees at Wallops Flight Facility (WFF) have submitted an EEO Class Action lawsuit that Management, under its legal recommendation, prefers not to provide any information in violation of our CBA. I believe these legal claims are erroneous, since the CBA was signed by Management and GESTA officials, but what is really disturbing is that NASA's efforts to correct the disparities in the EPCS have generally failed throughout the Agency over the past eight (8) years. It is sad that the Agency

is using our tax dollars to defend clear bias in the EPCS data, rather than more swiftly and decisively working with Labor to correct the known problems in the ECPS and other areas. NASA's unions are now asking the Agency the change to a Pass/Fail system, since the EPCS is subject to statistical bias, which adversely affects our minority employees.

The NASA unions have asked NASA Headquarters Management to allow the Phased Retirement Management decisions to be grievable and Management has agreed. An Agency-wide agreement was signed to that effect in the spring. The Phased Retirement program has since been rolled out for GSFC Employees and is intended to help employees who are eligible for retirement to work half time while receiving half of their salary and half of their retirement benefits. Employees are expected to spend 20% of their time mentoring and must retire in two years or apply for a one extension, but must then retire.

In Solidarity,

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