GESTA NEWSLETTER

FATE LOCAL 29

www.gesta-goddard.org



About GESTA

GESTA is the professional employee association for the approximately 1800 federal scientists, engineers, and technicians employed at the NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC) in Greenbelt, Maryland, as well as employees at Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS) in NYC and Katherine Johnson IV&V Facility (KJIV&V) in West Virginia. We are run by volunteers, and advocate on behalf of our members in order to improve our working conditions in support of NASA's missions, and the critical service we provide to the scientific community and to the American public.

GESTA is a local affiliate of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE), along with other NASA centers. Working together with other federal IFPTE local affiliates we are able to network, learn, and advocate together regarding our working conditions, NASA policies, and other important issues that impact federal employees.

Officers & Representatives

President: David R. Williams

Executive Vice-President: Tryshanda T. Moton

Secretary: Kendall A. Yarqus

Treasurer: Alyssa Barlis

Area Vice-President (AVP): Steven L. Hard

Area Vice-President (AVP): James P. MacKinnon

Area Vice-President (AVP): Namrita K. Owens (Rita)

Area Vice-President (AVP): Romae P. Young

Area Vice-President (AVP): Ron Zellar

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President's Corner

This is my first article as GESTA President following Anel Flores' retirement, and the first GESTA newsletter in some time, so there is quite a bit to talk about, but I will try to keep it relatively brief. I believe it is fair to say that we are finally emerging from a very trying few years. The previous administration has been not particularly union-friendly, to put it mildly. Civil and political strife have enveloped our country, and the effects are being felt in all aspects of our lives. The pandemic has completely overturned our personal and work lives, and we are still finding our way through that. So while the union has fought, and will continue to fight, against anti-union policies, against discrimination and suppression of ideas, and for our employees' health and safety in the workplace, I believe we can also recognize there may be a silver lining in the future.

The current administration has taken measures to reverse the union-busting policies of the previous one, and in the latest move has actually granted TSA employees full collective bargaining rights. The civil discord has resulted in a much greater recognition of the inherent inequalities in our society and workplace, and has already led to changes that are at least beginning to address some of these long-standing problems. And the accommodations we have had to make over the last year in response to COVID-19 will probably result in much greater flexibilities in the future in terms of work arrangements, telecommuting, and communications. As we move on from the last few years, GESTA is working, and will continue to work, to ensure that progress continues to be made and that the rights of all our employees are respected and advanced.



Goddard Coronavirus Status

Goddard Main Campus is operating in "Stage 2" of the reopening plan. Temperature checks at the entrances have been suspended and all entrances are accessible as before the pandemic. Cafeterias, the Child Care facility and the exercise facility are still closed, but management is considering steps to reopen these. Face masks are only required for those people that have not been vaccinated. However, others may wear them and mask wearing doesn't necessarily mean someone is not vaccinated. As always, please be respectful of your fellow workers.

Directorates are tracking campus occupancy. So, if you are planning to return to campus, discuss the situation with your supervisor first and get their concurrence.

If you are asked to return to campus and are not comfortable doing so, please speak with your supervisor to ask for a reasonable accommodation. If your supervisor is unwilling to accommodate you, please contact a GESTA officer for assistance. Accomodations should be granted until Goddard is in an operationally normal stage.

Any safety violations or concerns can be reported on the internal Goddard safety reporting system: https://safety1st.gsfc.nasa.gov/form/report-a-covid-19-safety-concern. Please be specific and, if possible, include your contact information so a safety rep can respond to you.



Executive Council Spotlight

The retirement of Anel Flores lead to several openings and required a rearrangement of the GESTA executive council. GESTA held elections to fill these positions in February 2021, and at this point the executive council is now settled into their new positions. The section outlines the current roster of the executive council and includes short bios. Meet our officers:

President - Dave Williams



I have been the president of GESTA for almost 6 months now, since Anel Flores retired. I have been at Goddard since 1993, the first 15 years as a contractor and the last 13 as a civil servant. I am a planetary scientist in Code 690.1 at the NASA Space Science Data Coordinated Archive (NSSDCA), where I am primarily responsible for overseeing the operations and archiving, validating, and restoring planetary data from NASA and other missions. I initially got involved with the union on the issue of term-to-perm promotions, which were not being done in the legally required two-year period but were being treated more as long-term tenure assignments. Thanks primarily to my predecessor we won our challenge and restored the two-

year period. I've been proud to be a part of this union and work with an outstanding group of officers here and hope to be able to continue the amazing work that Anel did for the union over the past decade plus.

Executive Vice-President - Tryshanda Moton

An aerospace engineer in the Mission Systems Engineering Branch, I have worked at Goddard for more than 10 years as a civil servant. In this capacity, I currently provide project support to SWFO-L1 by documenting engineering processes and improvements, tracking and verifying requirements, and managing risks. I am also responsible for developing documents for engineering management plans, project reviews and mission assessments. I've has been involved with GESTA since 2012 after attending several monthly meetings and witnessing the advocacy and drive of the GESTA officers in support of our employees. In 2016, I accepted a nomination as Area VP and served in that role



for 4 years. I am excited to support President Dave Williams and the other members of the Executive Council,



and I am proud to represent the interests of Goddard's highly skilled employees by actively engaging with Goddard management, with the focus of building employees' collective bargaining strength and management relations. As a passionate co-leader of GESTA, I have engaged Congressional leadership and the national news media on issues of the federal government shutdown of 2018-19, federal pay increases, and gender pay equity in the federal government.

Area Vice President- Steve Hard



I am a current area vice-president of GESTA and have been a member since 2017 when I joined as a pathways intern at NASA IV&V in Fairmont, WV. After obtaining a Masters in EE from West Virginia University the following year, I started my permanent civil service career with NASA in the Components and Hardware branch (596) where I am responsible for developing and testing FPGA firmware for in-house built flight hardware. I was nominated to be a GESTA area VP in 2018 and since then I have tried my best to provide an early-career perspective to the Executive Council with a primary goal of increasing communication and involvement across all Goddard sites and facilities. Since former GESTA

president Anel Flores retired, I was asked to take over responsibility of coordinating our GESTA website. I am proud to be a part of this union and work with stellar executive council members, and I'm committed to improving and updating content to increase awareness of relevant union-related issues and information for our members.

Area Vice President - James Mackinnon



At Goddard I have been a software developer with the Science Data Processing Branch for roughly 5 years now, and during that time worked on a variety of tasks from flight projects to IRADs. While it's only been relatively recently that I became a full member of the union and even more recently part of the executive council, I am eager to become more deeply involved and have always felt strongly about the power of organized labor. The two issues I am most interested in assisting with is member recruitment and the condition/sanitation of our work areas. As a regular member, I have helped colleagues not only realize that they are in a union but also convince them of the benefits of

becoming full members. Ultimately the more of us that stand together the better the union can fight for us all. However, my concerns are not limited to these areas and I want to do everything I can help improve the general welfare of all of our members.



Area Vice President - Rita Owens

I just started serving as an Area Vice President of GESTA and have been a member of GESTA for about 10 years. I joined GESTA when they helped resolve my management issue. I am interested in helping improve our workplace and breaking down all the barriers for employees to have more productivity. I am an electrical engineer with the Electrical Systems Branch (Code 565). I have been involved in a variety of engineering projects such flight hardware designs, requirements & verification documentations, MBSE modeling, IRADs, etc. at GSFC since 1993 and also obtained a MS degree in EE from Johns Hopkins University in 1999. I also served as a chair of the Equal Accessibility Advisory Committee (EAAC) in 2008-2010. I renamed the committee to EAAC, attended meetings with the GSFC Center Director and councils, and arranged events to



increase disability awareness. I also participated in various committees at GSFC such as Standing Awards Committee, GSFC Diversity Dialogue, AETD Diversity Focus Group, EO Council, Diversity Council, Lactation program (Supermom) and People with Disabilities Advisory Committee (Vice-Chair).

Area Vice President - Romae Young



I am currently the GESTA secretary and running for Area Vice President. I became a GESTA member after GESTA helped me with my management issue. I love solving problems and wanted to become involved and got my foot in the door as the secretary. AS AVP, I would like to focus on GESTA initiatives to improve working conditions, supervisor and employee relationships, and Goddard-specific initiatives to ensure that employees' rights are protected and that employees are educated and aware of their rights.

I started my career at NASA Goddard as an aerospace engineer working for Ford Aerospace as a spacecraft engineer for Landsat 4 and 5 and later the Orbit Adjust Engineer and Power Subsystem Engineer. This was followed by years as a Flight Dynamics (FDF) Mission Manager for Expendable Launch Vehicles including the Shuttle, before becoming a Booz, Allen, and Hamilton consultant. My experience

includes defense, where I worked in research and development for the Boeing Company for the Missile Defense Agency. I returned to NASA Goddard as a civil servant as the FDF Deputy Manager for Conjunction Assessments, and I did analysis work for MAVEN. I currently work for the Goddard Chief Technologist.



Area Vice President - Ron Zellar



I joined the civil service in 2001 as an Associate Branch Head in the Flight Software Branch and spent about 3 years as a manager here at Goddard before returning to the regular engineering workforce. I was always sympathetic to the labor movement, but became a serious fan of unions after seeing the documentary "Inequality for All". I've come to see unions as a critical, yet flagging, element of a healthy society and democracy. I started supporting GESTA as a commitment to those ideas.

For me, GESTA is a way for employees to support one another, to share information, and provide management with a unified voice that represents

the workforce perspective. Serving as Area VP is an extension of my support of GESTA.

Secretary - Ken Yargus

I am Ken Yargus (he/him), an Environmental Engineer in Code 250, Medical and Environmental Management Division, for 13 years. I worked previously with Marines and the Navy. I was the database administrator and president of a community food pantry, with limited experience as a secretary or active union member.

As an active member and former co-chair of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Advisory Committee, I appreciate GESTA's enforcing nondiscrimination and resolving grievances. I am proud of my stepdaughter's leadership in her teacher's union and wish the rest of my children had union



protection. Diverse input and improved communications between unions, employees, and management results in fair and informed decisions.

Treasurer - Alyssa Barlis

I started as a Pathways student at GSFC in 2017, and then converted to a full-time civil servant position in 2019. I work in the Optics Branch doing optical component characterization and measurement. In addition to my technical work, I'm heavily involved with developing the early career community in the Engineering & Technology directorate. I am also very interested in improving Goddard's facilities, and I currently serve as GESTA's facilities departmental representative.



Important Events in Union History

The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, March 25, 1911



This past March marked the 100th anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in Manhattan. It was the deadliest industrial disaster in New York City killing 146 people, mostly women and girls. The tragedy led to workplace safety reforms and legislation. It was a critical event in the American Labor Movement.

On Saturday, March 25, 1911, a fire broke out on the 8th floor of a 10-story building where the Triangle Waist Company operated a garment factory that made women's blouses called "shirtwaists". The factory occupied floors 8 through 10 and

employed 500 workers, mostly immigrant women and girls who worked 6 days per week for very low wages.

The fire spread to the 9th floor and blocked one of two stairwells that could be used for escape. The other stairwell was intentionally kept locked so that worker's purses could be inspected before they left. The door remained locked since the foreman with the key had already escaped the building. Some workers



were able to use one of the two freight elevators to escape. Others used a stairway to get to the roof before the stairs were engulfed in flames.

The building had only one exterior fire escape that may have been in need of repair before the fire. It was quickly overwhelmed by the number of people and the heat of the fire. The fire escape collapsed and 20 people on it fell about 100 feet to their death on the concrete below. Many others remained trapped on the fire escape. They were eventually overcome by smoke and fire.

The elevator operators made three trips to the 9th floor before the elevator rails buckled. Victims on the 9th floor forced open the elevator shaft doors and several people jumped into it. When the fire department arrived, their ladders could only go as high as the 7th floor. The fireman's life nets were ripped through by the falling victims. 62 of the 146 victims of the fire, jumped or fell to their death outside the building.

In mid-April, the company owners were indicted on manslaughter charges, but they were acquitted after a jury trial. However in 1913, they were found liable for wrongful death in a civil suit which resulted in compensation of \$75 per victim, about 10 weeks wages for the lowest earning workers. The owners were insured and received about \$60,000 more than their reported losses, or about \$400 per casualty.

Outrage from the fire and factory working conditions forced the state to form a commission that led to 38 new laws making New York one of the most progressive states for labor reform. The new laws mandated better building access and egress, fireproofing, fire extinguishers, alarm systems and automatic sprinklers, better eating and toilet facilities for workers, and limited the number of hours that women and children could work.

GE STA

Newsletter

General Union News

Editorial Summary: Interference in Unionization Elections.

Ron Zellar, GESTA AVP

A recent editorial in the Washington Post by Barry Eidlin discusses the unionization vote in Bessemer, AL and why these votes are stacked against labor organizers. The editorial is summarized below.

"The problem is that union elections today are nothing like the elections we learned about in civics class," Eidlin says. In any other election, we'd question the outcome of a process where voters were being surveilled, interrogated, pressured or forced to listen to propaganda denouncing opponents. Yet these tactics are accepted for unionization elections. In Bessemer, employees were required to attend anti-union meetings multiple times per week. "Vote No" signs were even posted inside bathroom stalls. Management would identify workers that resisted their message and seek one-on-one conversations to apply pressure.

In addition, employers like Amazon regularly hire "union avoidance" companies to game the vote, easily outspending labor organizers by millions of dollars. First, they try to pack the voter pool (the bargaining unit) with people they believe are anti-union and exclude those they think are pro-union. Amazon's tactic was to try to include temporary and seasonal workers, nearly quadrupling the possible voters, and to offer severance packages to unhappy workers to encourage them to quit.

"Meanwhile, union supporters have to figure out creative ways to reach workers off the clock to avoid management interference." Generally, companies don't



allow union reps equal time during their mandatory anti-union meetings, nor even allow them on company property. **The company easily dominates almost all communication channels about the union vote**. Trying to get information to workers means that labor organizers have to wait at stoplights outside the company gates just to get a moment with their co-workers. Even then, only a flyer can be handed to someone if they roll down a window, and a meaningful conversation is impossible.

Eidlin's message is clear. The deck is stacked against unions from the very start. Anti-union forces have the resources, the influence and the lawyers to project their message. **Even today, joining a union is an uphill battle.**

Near the end of the editorial, Eidlin seems to imply that employers should not be allowed to communicate anti-union (or pro-union) messages at all. "Joining a union is a federal right, one that employers have no business infringing upon."

Barry Eidlin is an assistant professor of sociology at McGill University and author of "Labor and the Class Idea in the United States and Canada." His editorial, "It's all too easy for employers to interfere in union elections", appeared in the print edition of the Washington Post on Sunday April 25, 2021.



Grievance News

GESTA is here to represent you so do not hesitate to get in touch with us if you have a grievance or other concern.

Status of Recent Greivance Cases

GESTA represented a unit member who was issued a letter of counseling for allegedly communicating unprofessionally and using a "harsh" tone. After discussions with GESTA, management agreed to amend the original letter to remove some inaccurate claims about her conduct as well as to specify the letter's expiration date.

We also settled a grievance for a member who was formally reprimanded for his tone when raising concerns about technical matters on his projects. At Step 2, Management agreed to rescind the reprimand and replace it with a letter of counseling.



Letters to GESTA and Events

GESTA Supports LGBT+ Rights

Thank you GESTA for adding gender identity nondiscrimination to your collective bargaining agreement. Your visible support of a marginalized community helps co-workers feel safer and more engaged at work, and more likely to keep working at NASA.

Please contact me if you are interested in subsequent action per your thoughtful discussion. We can work together to create a more inclusive workplace.

Thank you!

Sincerely, Ken Yargus

Former co-chair, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Advisory Committee



Bringing the Gender Pay Gap to the Forefront

GESTA hosted <u>an IFPTE Women's Solidarity Network webinar</u>, featuring Fay Faraday from the Equal Pay Coalition. This talk gave participants a look at how the pay gap affects employees and their families, despite existing legislation that prohibits discrimination. GESTA looks forward to hosting more Speaker Series!



The Women and Unions International Speaker Series is an initiative of the Women's Solidarity Network (WSN. WSN is a project of the IFPTE. Our mandate is to connect members together and promote the involvement of women within IFPTE and the broader labor movement.



Speaking Series

7/15/2021, 12 to 1 PM - "GESTA IFPTE Overview"

IFPTE Rep, Chris Langford, and IFPTE Legislative Representative & Researcher, Faraz Khan, will provide an overview of IFPTE, as well as provide some updates on federal employee legislation & issues.

9/16/2021, 12 to 1 PM - "Contested Terrain or Common Ground? A History of the Labor Movement and Christianity in America"

Darren Wood

10/2021 (Exact date/time TBD)- "GESTA's victory"

Anel Flores, the former GESTA president will talk about some important cases that GESTA had won.

Newsletter Feedback & Website Design

What do you think of our newsletter template and website? If you have not seen our new website design and logo, following the link below.

www.gesta-goddard.org

Over the past month we have been working to improve our outreach with the assistant of our national parent association, the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFTPE). The goal is to ensure we provide a professional look and feel to our organization.

As you review this newsletter, please let us know what you think about the information presented, what you'd like to see in the next newsletter, and most importantly, how you GESTA can best serve our members.

Do you have ideas for a story, have a great idea for a new section, or just have some feedback? Please email us at <u>gestaifpte@gmail.com</u>.



How to Join & Stay Informed

GESTA is a volunteer professional association with bargaining rights with NASA. As such, we are funded and run by NASA employees who voluntarily join our organization. We are not a third party organization, nor are we traditional trade union.

As an employee based organization at GSFC, our purpose is to meaningfully engage with NASA Management and federal government policy markers and leaders to address issues relevant to our careers, working conditions, NASA's mission, and the critical service we provide to tax payers.

Working together we have, and can continue to, with your support:

- partner with Management to achieve success and resolve issues that impede organizational goals;
- support fair, equitable and objective evaluations;
- negotiate improvements over our working conditions;
- advocate for training and professional development;
- ensure no one has to compromise safety and their professional integrity over politics or favoritism;
- enforce and continue to improve our contract with Management that spells out our rights and conditions of employment while ensuring flexibility and professional discretion to get our work done; and
- advocate for or against legislation that currently or will impact GSFC, NASA at large, and our professions.

To become a member, visit www.gesta-goddard.org/join.html and fill out both our GESTA Membership Form and the Payroll Deduction Form, and then return to any of GESTA's elected representatives. Alternatively, contact us and we will drop off and pick up your form at your convenience.

Have a question? Feel free to contact us.

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