

Union Representation Election Process and FAQs

On July 23, 2007, representatives of the U.S. Government Accountability Office and the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE) entered into an agreement to hold an election to determine whether certain GAO employees wish to be exclusively represented by the GAO Employees Organization, IFPTE. Permanent employees of GAO on the payroll for the period ending July 21, 2007, and assigned to a position covered by the Analyst Performance-Based Compensation System (PE) and whose designated level is Band I or Band II, including those designated as Band IIA and Band IIB, are eligible to vote in the election. Probationary employees and employees in the Professional Development Program (PDP) who are in these Bands and pay system are also eligible to vote. Confidential employees, employees in Safety and Security, and supervisors or management officials (*e.g.*, Band III and above) are not eligible to vote. Otherwise eligible employees who resign, retire, or are removed before September 19, 2007 are excluded.

The election, which will be conducted under the supervision of the Personnel Appeals Board, will take place on September 19, 2007, from 6:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. in the Bid Protest Room, number 1N35/1N37 on the first floor at GAO Headquarters. Field office staff and staff on extended travel or leave will have the opportunity to vote by mail. Their ballots will be mailed on August 23, 2007, and must be received by the PAB by September 19 in order to be counted. Headquarters staff who will be on approved leave, travel status or telework on September 19 may vote by absentee ballot in the Bid Protest Room, 1N35/1N37, on the first floor of the GAO Headquarters building on any one of the following days: August 28, 30, and September 4, 6, 11, 13, 18 from 11:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.

Upon entering the Bid Protest Room, employees will proceed to a table in the front of the room where they will be asked to state their names and show either GAO identification or other valid government issued photo identification. Employees who are casting absentee ballots will also have to produce an appropriate showing of their unavailability to vote on September 19. Employees will be given a ballot to mark either “Yes” or “No” to the following question: “Do you wish to be represented for the purpose of exclusive recognition under the provisions of the Government Accountability Office Personnel Act of 1980 in the proposed unit by the following? GAO Employees Organization, IFPTE.” Each employee will mark a ballot in a private voting booth, fold the unsigned ballot, and place it in a secure ballot box.

After the last ballot is cast on September 19, Board staff will co-mingle the absentee ballots and the mail ballots with the ballots cast that day. The counting of the ballots will then begin and the tally will be announced to the observers and representatives from each party at the conclusion of the count.

Attached please find responses to some Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to help in understanding the process.

FAQs

Who will conduct the election?

The Executive Director of the Personnel Appeals Board is supervising the conduct of the election. Members of the Board's staff, former PAB members, and temporary staff from the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) will be handling the election process itself. They will all be identified as "PAB Agents" at the polling place. The PAB will certify the election results.

Who is eligible to vote in the election?

Every permanent employee of GAO on the payroll for the period ending July 21, 2007, and assigned to a position covered by the Analyst Performance-Based Compensation System (PE) and whose designated level is Band I or Band II, including those designated as Band IIA and Band IIB, is eligible to vote in the election. Probationary employees and employees in the Professional Development Program (PDP) who are in these Bands and pay system are included as eligible voters. Excluded are otherwise eligible employees who resign, retire or are removed before September 19, 2007.

When will the election be held?

Eligible GAO staff assigned to Headquarters in Washington, DC can cast their ballots on September 19, 2007 from 6:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. Ballots for eligible staff who work in field offices and eligible staff on either continuous approved leave or continuous approved travel status will be mailed to employees' home addresses on August 23, 2007.

Where will the election be held?

The election will take place in the Bid Protest Room at GAO Headquarters, 441 G Street, NW, Washington, DC. The Bid Protest Room is located at 1N35/1N37 on the first floor.

Can I vote during work hours?

You can vote anytime between 6 a.m. and 7 p.m. You do not need to take leave. And you do not need to wait until lunchtime and after hours. You may take as long as you need to go to the Bid Protest Room and complete the voting process.

Is this a secret process?

Yes. Whether you vote on September 19 or by absentee ballot, you will mark your ballot in the privacy of a voting booth and deposit the folded, unsigned ballot in a secure box that will not be

opened until the election is over. Any ballot that contains a signature or any other identifying mark will be voided which means that your vote will not count.

What is a voided ballot?

A voided ballot is one that cannot be counted for the election, *e.g.*, a signed ballot, an unmarked ballot, or one that has been marked both “Yes” and “No.”

How will field office staff vote?

Ballots will be mailed on August 23, 2007 to eligible staff assigned to field offices and HQ staff on either continuous approved leave or continuous approved travel status for the period from August 23, through September 19, 2007. Included with the ballot will be specific instructions and materials for mailing your ballot to a designated Post Office box in Washington, DC. You will place your completed ballot in a yellow secret ballot envelope bearing no identifying information. You will place the sealed yellow envelope inside a white, prepaid and pre-addressed return envelope. You will be asked to sign your name on this outer, numbered envelope. Your signature and number will be compared to a master list of voters to confirm your eligibility. In order to be counted, your ballot must be received by the PAB no later than September 19, 2007; so you must mail it in sufficient time.

Will ballots received by mail be secret? How will they be secured?

The secrecy and security of mail ballots will be protected. Ballots will be mailed to a U.S. Post Office box that will only be accessible to a Board staff member. Each time that the staff member empties the Post Office box, she will secure the return envelopes (holding the secret ballot envelopes) in a large manila envelope, sign her name over the envelope seal, date the large outer envelope and lock the envelope in a file cabinet located in a locked file room. Near the close of the election on September 19, the manila envelopes will be transported from the Board’s offices to the Bid Protest Room in GAO Headquarters. Board staff will open the sealed manila envelopes in the presence of the observers and remove the individual return envelopes. Board staff will compare the eligibility key number and signature to the master list of names and numbers, and then open the individual return envelopes. All the secret ballot envelopes will be co-mingled before any are opened. When the secret ballot envelopes are opened, Board staff will remove the ballots from the secret ballot envelopes, and co-mingle them with the ballots that were manually cast at Headquarters before the tally begins.

What if I don’t receive a ballot in the mail?

If you have not received a ballot by August 30, please call the Clerk of the Board at 202.512.6137.

What will be on the ballot?

You will be asked to answer “Yes” or “No” to a single question: “Do you wish to be represented for the purpose of exclusive recognition under the provisions of the Government Accountability Office Personnel Act of 1980 in the proposed unit by the following? GAO Employees Organization, IFPTE.”

What does IFPTE stand for?

The full name of the organization is the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers, AFL-CIO.

Will I need to show identification in order to vote?

Yes. If you are voting by manual or absentee ballot, you will be required to present either your GAO identification or valid government issued photo identification, such as a driver’s license.

Other than staff conducting the election, who will be present in the Bid Protest Room on the day of the election?

Each party, GAO and the IFPTE, is entitled to have an equal number of observers in the room, all of whom will be wearing identification tags. No one will follow you to or from the voting booth. No media will be allowed.

Can the observers participate in the election process?

The observers will have the right to challenge voters whom they have good cause to believe are not eligible to vote in the election.

Can I still vote if my eligibility is challenged?

You will be provided a secret ballot envelope, and then you will be permitted to proceed to the voting booth, mark your ballot, fold it and place it in the secret ballot envelope. Instead of putting it into the secure ballot box, you will hand the sealed secret ballot envelope to a PAB agent who will be wearing an identification tag. The agent will place your secret ballot envelope in a challenged ballot envelope and then in a secure box. At the conclusion of the election, the challenged ballots will be reviewed by Board officials and observers. If, after review, it is determined that you are eligible to vote in the election then your ballot will be added to the secret ballot box.

I will be absent on September 19. Can I still vote?

If you are going to be on approved leave or on telework or travel status on September 19, you are eligible to vote by absentee ballot. You may vote by absentee ballot in the Bid Protest Room, 1N35-1N37, on the first floor of the GAO Headquarters building on August 28, 30, or September 4, 6, 11, 13, 18 from 11:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. You must bring an appropriate showing of your unavailability on September 19 with you in order to vote by absentee ballot. Travel papers and documents showing approved leave or telework are acceptable.

I work at Headquarters but will be on extended sick leave (or military or annual leave) from August 19 until October 1? Can I vote?

Individuals who are otherwise qualified to vote in the manual election at Headquarters but who will be on continuous approved travel status or continuous approved leave between August 23, 2007 and September 19, 2007 MUST IDENTIFY THEMSELVES to the Clerk of the Personnel Appeals Board before August 20, 2007 and supply support for their status (e.g., email confirmation of leave from supervisor) by fax (202.512.7525), email (pab@gao.gov) or delivery to the Board office. The employee must also provide his/her home mailing address. The Clerk of the Board will provide the list of names to GAO and to the Union; GAO in turn will supply the Board with mailing labels printed for individuals qualifying in this manner for the mail ballot.

I am assigned to Headquarters but will be on extended travel status from August 15 through September 25. How can I vote?

Individuals who are otherwise qualified to vote in the manual election at Headquarters but who will be on continuous approved travel status between August 23, 2007 and September 19, 2007 MUST IDENTIFY THEMSELVES to the Clerk of the Personnel Appeals Board before August 20, 2007 and supply support for their status (e.g., travel order) by fax (202-512-7525), email (pab@gao.gov) or delivery to the Board office (Suite 560, 820 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002). The employee must also provide his/her home mailing address. The Clerk of the Board will provide the list of names to GAO and to the Union; GAO in turn will supply the Board with mailing labels printed for individuals qualifying in this manner for the mail ballot.

I work in a field office but will be at GAO Headquarters on September 19. Can I cast my ballot in Washington?

No. Your ballot will be mailed to you on August 23, 2007 and you should follow the mailing instructions that accompany that ballot.

Will mail ballots be distinguishable from ballots cast manually in Headquarters?

No. All of the ballots will be identical. The ballots received by mail will be added to the secure ballot box containing the ballots cast manually and mixed in with them before any tallying commences.

I am leaving GAO in early September. Will I be able to vote before my departure?

No. If you are not employed by GAO on September 19, 2007, you may not vote.

I will need assistance in order to cast my ballot. Will someone be available?

There will be PAB agents present in the Bid Protest Room on September 19 from 6:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. and they will be prepared to assist you in casting your ballot and maintaining its confidentiality. It would be helpful to inform PAB officials prior to September 19 if you will need assistance. Assistance will also be available for individuals voting by absentee ballot. If possible please provide advance notice to the PAB. You may contact the Clerk of the Board, at 202.512.6137 or at pab@gao.gov.

Is electioneering permitted at the election site?

No. The Bid Protest Room is off limits for electioneering of any kind. Please be sure to remove all campaign buttons, stickers, or insignia before entering the Bid Protest Room.

When will the ballots be counted?

After the last ballot is cast on September 19, Board staff will begin counting all of the ballots, including absentee ballots and those received in the mail. Observers and representatives for GAO and the Union will be present for the count.

When will the results of the election be available?

The Board's Executive Director will announce a tally of the ballots to the observers and representatives from GAO and IFPTE upon completion of the counting of all of the ballots. The PAB will certify the election results.

What if I have additional questions about the process?

You may call (202.512.6137) or email (pab@gao.gov) the Clerk of the Board.