

*'A Union of Professionals'*

**Matt Rector**  
President

**Tim Fedenko**  
Vice-President

**Sanjay Sharma**  
Secretary

**James Lujan**  
Treasurer



**AFT Local 1581**  
**AFL-CIO**

April 15, 2010

Carol Somerfleck, AHES GFT Steward  
P.O. Box 326200  
Hagatna, Guam 96932

Dear Mrs. Somerfleck:

Thank you for writing to the executive council. As I am sure you are fully aware, GFT's mission is, "To improve the quality of life for our members and their families", which we do through collective bargaining agreements, worker empowerment and participating effectively in our democracy. It is in everyone's best interest for the teachers of GDOE to not only be empowered to participate in the decision making processes of all aspects of our educational system but to have decent learning/working conditions which are all guaranteed by our collective bargaining agreement. The strength of GFT is not only the size of the staff or the quality of leadership, but the unified educated voice of our members being involved in their union. Most of the questions being asked are typical of members that do not actively participate in the union. Since you are a school steward, I would have expected that you would know the answers to these questions or at the very least, known how to find them. That being said I have been tasked by the executive council to address your concerns.

Over the past seven years of being the secretary of GFT, in our efforts to better inform our members and families, GFT's medium of communication has evolved from a single-sheet newsletter to the many facets that we currently possess. The on-going issues that GFT members face are addressed throughout the new modes of communication. Our collective bargaining agreement affords us the rights to place materials within teacher boxes and a bulletin board at each school that gets updated by the school steward. GFT's constantly improving website allows members and the public to stay informed of current events. There are emails being sent out three times a week (Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays). Also, there is a television show that discusses working conditions of members within GFT. The local newspapers and television stations are contacted for major media releases. Stewards are afforded training on various topics as well through the steward's training offered at least once a year. Please bear in mind that GFT grown in numbers and strength over the last six to represent a whole plethora of worker including teachers, support staff, nurses, hospital staff, fire fighters, port workers, bus drivers, police officers, public health employees, and many others making us one of the most diverse and fastest growing locals in the AFT. As I'm sure you know, numbers equal the power to win for all of our families.

Unions, across the nation and around the world face similar challenges as we do, Management trying to destroy us by attacking our leaders in every way possible which is why many unions have done as we have and taken our leaders out from managements control. In fact, even the AFT has a full-time president and several full-time vice-presidents. For many years in the past, GFT had full-time presidents, on leave with pay, that managed the union. However, the case of President Rector is a bit different. At the beginning of his Presidency GFT was fighting for the life of your contract which the Superintendent and School board at the time were sworn to destroy it and the union as well. They refused to give President Rector any release time, paid or the other wise. As you might imagine this gave the management of DOE the full time and resources of Guam's largest Public Agency to wage war on our contract and union, whereas President Rector had to teach full time, be chief negotiator for our contract and run the multitude



of facets of our union. As I'm sure you realize this gave DOE a great advantage. Henceforth President Rector took a bold and brave step that very few would take. With the full support of the Executive council, we asked the membership to amend our constitution, like many other unions across the nation in similar circumstances have, to allow him to be a full time President. Once the membership agreed, he resigned from DOE, thereby losing his right to contribute to his GovGuam defined benefit retirement plan and job security.

Fortunately, this gambit resulted in a great victory for all of DOE's Teachers and Students with the ratification of one of the best CBAs in the Nation, winning Millions of additional dollars for teachers and rights that teachers have never won GFTs 45 year history.

President Rector may have stepped down from being a senator as a result of legal maneuvering by our enemies due to actions he committed when I was a month old, twenty-eight years ago and when he was a teenager, but this has absolutely no bearing on his standing as President of our great union. In fact, the executive council was completely disgusted with the non-stop war on our President and our union by the people that have driven our economy, island and school system into the ground for their own profits.

The executive council sets a budget every year based on the number of members and other such things like grants and advertising. This as well as other documents you requested are available to you at the GFT office but are not release to the general public. Information regarding pay of specific individuals is not released, out of respect for the employees. The GFT is audited every year by an auditing firm, which is then forwarded to AFT for their review.

In regards to the constitution and elections, the processes for amending the constitution and the election process have been followed. The process for amending the constitution is outlined in Article XII of the constitution and by-laws. All amendments were posted on the union's website in the timelines prescribed. Ratified minutes of the general membership are available for viewing at the union office.

I have served voluntarily for seven years as the secretary of the union. Anybody who wants to dedicate their time to improving our great union should seriously consider getting involved in our committees and running for office. We are constantly seeking to develop and educate new leaders for GFT that can help to lead our union into even a greater growth and power to win for our families an even brighter future.

In solidarity we thrive,



Sanjay H. Sharma  
GFT Secretary