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Winter 2016 No. 2

# GIPSA *NEWS*

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GRAIN INSPECTION, PACKERS AND STOCKYARDS ADMINISTRATION EMPLOYEES

## Take an Extra Day to Focus on Real Leadership Civility Shouldn't Come Around Every Four Years

By Larry Mitchell

WASHINGTON—Every four years the calendar displays an aberration at the tail end of February. That doesn't mean we stop wishing friends and relatives born on February 29 a happy birthday the rest of the time, or that those folks are only 1/4 their age compared to the rest of us. A calendar is simply a reminder. Nature gives us the true signal when to plant and harvest. But an extra day in a month known for presidents, African American history, and civil rights is an opportunity to reflect on how we should conduct ourselves as members of an agricultural community and as citizens of this powerful nation.



Rather than focusing on issues with some degree of civility, the discourse this month among candidates seeking higher office is fraught with more public divisiveness and personal diatribes.

I'll use this leap year instead to remember and give thanks for the enlightened leadership of outgoing Deputy Secretary Krysta Harden, who worked tirelessly during a career spanning several decades including at USDA, to expand opportunities that will assist America's beginning farmers and ranchers succeed. I consider her a mentor and one of the strongest advocates for the promise of our agricultural future.

Growing up in a household with a proud farming heritage dating back three generations laid a cornerstone of firsthand knowledge of issues impacting the agricultural community. Her understanding of the department also made her a champion of policies and initiatives in conservation, education and research, food and nutrition, as well as assistance for rural America. Throughout her career, Deputy Secretary Harden set a personal example that building relationships with stakeholders, elected officials, and colleagues is the most commonsense approach to improving economic opportunities on behalf of America's growing ranks of agriculture—women, immigrants, veterans, socially disadvantaged producers and neighbors struggling for assistance.

Maybe we ought to take this leap year to reflect on the kind of leader we should embrace for America. After all, leaders with that style and professional conduct should come around more than every four years.

## What's New From Around the Horn?

### Sharing Generosity and Advice

#### GIPSA Employees Empower Louisiana Community Through Generosity

DESTREHAN, La.—Some things are simply worth shouting about, especially when they involve GIPSA staff members going the extra mile to serve worthy causes.

In this case, the Federal Grain Inspection Service crew at the Destrehan office made a difference recently by helping to combat hunger and empower their neighbors through donations of canned goods for the Second Harvest Food Bank. The generosity of the FGIS members was part of a food drive for a hungry-free south Louisiana that yielded more than 1,000 pounds of non-perishable food. (Photo courtesy of Ms. Melba Garza)



#### GIPSA's Chief Information Officer Makes a Point to Share Advice



WASHINGTON—Microsoft Windows SharePoint has become the industry standard for corporate project collaboration. If you are looking for additional training about SharePoint, Mr Dan Knight, GIPSA's chief information officer recommends the following courses on AgLearn: [Creating and Managing Windows SharePoint Services 3.0 Sites](#); [Getting Started with Windows SharePoint Services 3.0](#); [Team Collaboration with Windows SharePoint Services 3.0](#); and [Using Windows SharePoint Services 3.0 with Microsoft Office System Applications](#).

Did you know that as a GIPSA employee you are also eligible to participate in the Microsoft Software Assurance Home Use Program (HUP)? This program allows you to purchase a single licensed copy of Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2016 or Office for Mac 2016 for use on your personal computer. The HUP price for the Office download is \$9.95.

Microsoft Visio and Project are also available for an additional \$9.95 each.

To purchase your copy of Microsoft Office type <http://hup.microsoft.com/> on your browser and follow these steps: First, select the country to which you want your order to be shipped and choose the language for viewing the order website. Next, enter your @usda.gov e-mail address and insert the following program code **A9BDC3B7EE**. A message from Microsoft HUP will follow shortly. Forward that e-mail to your personal e-mail account. From your personal computer open the Microsoft HUP e-mail, open the URL provided and place your order online. You will then have the ability to download the installation files. Please note that the program code is intended for USDA employees to access the HUP website and may not be shared.



#### GIPSA Idea Hotline

GIPSA Idea Hotline is open for business.  
Please send your suggestions or ideas to  
[GIPSA-Ideas@usda.gov](mailto:GIPSA-Ideas@usda.gov); fax them to 202-690-2173; or  
telephone them to 1-800-455-3447 or 202-720-7045.

It is best to send them via fax or email to reduce the possibility of transcription errors;





## FGIS Matters

By Randall Jones, GIPSA Headquarters, Washington, D.C.



**New Orleans Visit—Mr. Tony Goodeman, Deputy Director, FMD,** and I had the pleasure of traveling to the New Orleans Field Office January 12-13 for a meeting with all of the shift supervisors and managers within the field office. These opportunities to hear directly from the staff in the field are invaluable to me and the senior managers as we try to put in place policies and support structures to support the delivery of our services.

**Celebrating Former Field Office Manager Kerry Petit's Career—**The New Orleans Field Office held an impressive lunch celebration recognizing the long and illustrious career of Mr. Petit that stretched back to the early 1970s when he graduated from college and began his grain inspection career with a private inspection agency conducting work on the river. Mr. Petit was very insightful in his remarks talking about the transition from private inspection agencies to FGIS in 1976 or as he put it the “takeover” by federal government. Mr. Petit cited many of the changes that he has seen and witnessed in over 40 years speaking very highly of the dedicated FGIS staff and the important work that has been done in support of U.S. agriculture. The luncheon was well attended with many retirees coming back to share some fond memories with the group. We even had some former League City employees there including **former Field Office Manager Dave Grady** and his wife.

**Pathways Graduation—**FGIS Pathway participants traveled to the National Grain Center in Kansas City, Mo. the week of January 25, to put the final touches on their training before moving on to their first assignment in a field office. I would like to thank the staff at NGC for the time and effort that that put into the specialized training for this group which included training on grains, rice and beans, quality management, and budget and funding. Their week at NGC concluded with a graduation ceremony. Congratulations to Justin Johnson, Shawn Wah Lee, Joshua Diaz-Lopez, and Emill China- Perez who are now located in Crowley, Lake Charles and Stuttgart.

The next Pathways training program for agricultural commodity graders is currently under way and the selectees will be placed at the **Domestic Inspection Operations Office, NGC,** and at the **Toledo Field Office in Maumee, Ohio.** The recruitment for the 2016 class took place at

Tuskegee University, the University of Puerto Rico, and on a nationwide announcement on the USAjobs website.

**Implementation of Reauthorization Provisions—**The 2015 Reauthorization Act requires FGIS to make certain changes which will be accomplished by publishing in the Federal Regulations the changes necessary to the regulations. The proposed rule was posted in January and it will be open for public comment for 90 days. FGIS will reply to comments and then post the final rule. FGIS plans to post the final rule by the beginning of June.



**Celebrating 100 Years of USGSA and 40 Years of FGIS—**An **Anniversary Workgroup** has been established to plan and execute the celebration of the 100 year anniversary of the United States Grain Standards Act and the 40th anniversary of FGIS. The team is being led by **Ms. Jennifer Hill** who works for the Departmental Initiatives and International Affairs division. Ms. Hill has a very energetic team that is doing a terrific job in planning and we look forward to the next few months. The goal of the workgroup is to help celebrate this momentous anniversary throughout the program and in our offices across the country.

**Technology Focus Group—**FGIS is excited to announce the formation of the **Technology Focus Group** that consists of **Official Agency members** and whose mission is to provide FGIS with critical input as to the information technology needs of the Agencies as FGIS continues to enhance its IT infrastructure.

The Official Agency representatives include: **Ms. Kia Adams-Mikesh, North Dakota; Mr. Taylor Peck, Schaal; Mr. Jeff Rumney, Montana; Ms. Linsey Moffit-Tobin, Eastern Iowa; and Mr. Allen Trower, Kansas Grain Inspection.** FGIS members include: **Ms. Karen Guagliardo, Executive Systems Manager, and Mr. Lee Capper, Chief Innovative Officer.**



## FGIS Matters

By Randall Jones, GIPSA Headquarters, Washington, D.C.



### All Aboard for Mid-River Stowage Inspection

New Orleans—Mr. Carter Wanny (Pictured on the right) who oversees and manages the shiphold inspections for New Orleans, was kind enough to take me along for a mid-river shiphold inspection. Like many of our FGIS staff, Carter is a very seasoned employee with many years of experience with FGIS and is a master of his craft. Carter also mentioned to me that he is a veteran of the U.S. Armed Services for which we are very grateful for his service to our country.

This being my first shiphold inspection meant that Carter and his team had a lot extra work on their hands dealing with me and explaining all of the safety protocols and making sure that I did not mess up their well-orchestrated inspection. I learned a lot during the shiphold inspection and am very grateful to Carter and his staff for their patience and sharing their experience with me.



## Employees in the News



### In Memorium: Ms. Lynnette Scalise

GRAND FORKS, N.D.—Ms. Lynnette Scalise, an Agricultural Commodity Technician at the Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) sub-office in Moscow, Idaho died at her home February 15. She was 54.



**Ms. Lynnette Scalise  
(1961-2016)**

“Lynnette devoted more than 27 years of exemplary service to our nation. I can think of no greater reward in life than a career devoted to the business of our country as a public servant. Her dedication was essential to our mission in support of America’s farmers, ranchers and growers,” said Mr. Larry Mitchell, administrator for the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration.

“Over the course of her fervent career her efforts also made a difference in promoting our nation’s agricultural economy,” he said.

“Lynnette was a valued employee who was willing to help anyway she could—whether it was typing certificates, working on the billing, sampling commodities or preparing the samples. Whatever was needed, she would lend a hand.,” said Mr. Edward Stallman, field office manager at Grand Forks, N.D.

Ms. Scalise was born in Oakdale, La. in 1961. She moved to Moscow in 1981 where she resided until her death.

She began working for the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1988 and joined FGIS in 1989.

Ms. Scalise devoted her entire career to FGIS at the Moscow sub-office. In addition to her technician duties she managed safety for her office.

Ms. Scalise was passionate about music and spending time with her grandchildren.

She is survived by her daughter, Alena (Kirk) Hume, of Potlatch, Idaho; mother, Betty Strother; brothers, Kevin and Randall Strother; sisters, Melanie Rosgen and Janet Atkins; and granddaughters, Lillynne and Addalynn.

### USDA’s 2016 Agricultural Forum



WASHINGTON—Ms. Jennifer Hill, Federal Grain Inspection Service, and Mr. Peter Jackson, Packers and Stockyards Program, answer questions during USDA’s 92nd Agricultural Outlook Forum. USDA has hosted the meeting since 1923. It is USDA’s largest annual event with more than 1,600 attendees last year. The meeting serves as a platform of conversation about key issues within the agricultural community, including growers, processors, policy makers, U.S. and foreign governments as well as non-government officials. (USDA Photo by Ms. Amy Blechinger)

## Employees in the News

### A Distinguished Career Concludes as FGIS Prepares to Mark Historic Legislation

#### Farewell, Mr. Kerry Petit

DESTREHAN, La.—Senior GIPSA staff members took time during a general manager's meeting to recognize Mr. Kerry Petit, the former New Orleans field office manager, on his recent retirement from the Federal Grain Inspection Service after his 38 year career at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

During a farewell luncheon, Administrator Larry Mitchell presented the Administrator's Distinguished Group Award to the staff at the New Orleans field office.

Deputy Administrator Randall Jones and Mr. Anthony Goodeman, deputy director, field management division, held a general meeting to discuss GIPSA initiatives for FY 2016 and FGIS updates. Other senior managers attending included Mr. George Banks, Mr. Carl Jackson, and Mr. Lynn Thomas.



*C'est le Mardis Gras? Not really, mes amis. Pictured from left to right: Mr. Larry Mitchell, Mr. Kerry Petit, Mr. Randall Jones, and Mr. Anthony Goodeman. Laissez les bon temps rouler! (Photo courtesy of Ms. Heather Petit)*

#### Anniversaries in Landmark Grain Legislation Dot 2016 Landscape

WASHINGTON— Key anniversaries in the history of grain legislation and inspection are scheduled during the coming months and planning is in full swing at the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration headquarters. Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) staff are meeting weekly to work out details for celebrations at two main locations.

Starting this Summer GIPSA will celebrate the centennial of the U.S. Grain Standards Act signed into law by President Woodrow Wilson on August 11, 1916. The event marking the anniversary will take place at the National Grain Center in Kansas City, Mo. .

FGIS also approaches 40 distinguished years as a result of President Gerald Ford's approval on October 21, 1976. The planning committee looks to New Orleans as host for that event. Dates for the commemorations are not yet announced.

The Agricultural Marketing Act enacted on August 14, 1946 by President Harry Truman turns will also hit 70 this year.



## Employees in the News

### Packers Resident Agent Recognized for Exceptional Performance

AURORA, Colo.—A resident agent from the Packers and Stockyards Program Western Regional Office was recognized for outstanding effort during the past year at an awards ceremony January 27 along with federal, state, and local law enforcement officers. United States Attorney Damon P. Martinez acknowledged Resident Agent Rod Prather for exceptional performance of duty in keeping with the highest traditions of cooperative law enforcement and contributing to the attainment of justice in the District of New Mexico.

Agent Prather received praise for his extraordinary investigation which led to the filing of a 139-count state indictment against operators of High Plains Livestock, a livestock auction in Portales, N.M. It also led to the filing of the United States affirmative case against High Plains Livestock, its owners and operators for violating the Packers and Stockyards Act (PSA).

Agent Prather's meticulous investigation revealed that 13,868 records were altered as part of a scheme to defraud cattle consignors of \$2.7 million. It also provided the basis for a federal judge's finding that there was "overwhelming and uncontroverted evidence of rampant violations of the PSA". The court's order appointed a receiver to assess the ongoing viability of High Plains Livestock and potentially take over its operations.



Resident Agent Prather was nominated by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Ruth F. Keegan and Karen F. Grohman and Auditor Julie Chappell.

(From left to right: Ms. Julie Chappel, Ms. Ruth F. Keegan, Agent Rod Prather, Ms. Sarah Childress, U.S. Attorney Damon P. Martinez. Photo courtesy of Ms. Childress.)

### PSP Midwestern Regional Office Team Welcomes New Program Assistant

DES MOINES, Iowa—The Packers and Stockyards Program (PSP) Midwestern Regional Office recently added Ms. Stacey Campbell as a program assistant. Ms. Campbell joined the PSP team from the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA Central Iowa Health Care System where she served in the Social Work, Business/ER, and Human Resources Departments. She holds a Bachelor of Mass Communication from Grand View University, and a Master of Public Administration from Drake University.

Ms. Campbell resides with her family on a small Iowa farm, raises row crops and alfalfa along with horses, and a few hogs. Her family also plans to branch out into cattle in the future.



## News You Can Use

### Awards, Travel Cards...Even Something About Birds

#### President's Volunteer Service Awards



WASHINGTON— Nominations for the President's Volunteer Service Awards (PVSA) are due April 28.

All USDA employees are eligible for an award based on their volunteer hours to a qualifying organization from January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015.

Applicants must complete an application form and submit it to their PVSA coordinator.

The PVSA program affords recognition based on the number of hours served over a 12-month period or cumulative hours over the course of a lifetime. Volunteer hours already recognized in a previous PVSA are not eligible to be counted toward another award, with the exception of a Lifetime Achievement Award.

For additional information contact: Lisa Fyall at (202) 720-7045 or [Lisa.Fyall@USDA.gov](mailto:Lisa.Fyall@USDA.gov)

#### Eagles Take It Easy at USDA

WASHINGTON—Members of the band may be fading, but eagles are still performing center stage at the nation's capital. These days a pair of nesting Bald Eagles are the main attraction at the U.S. National Arboretum.

Dubbed *Mr. President* and *The First Lady*, this is the first Bald Eagle couple to nest in this location since 1947, according to the American Eagle Foundation.

In 2014 the patriotic pair first settled high atop a Tulip Poplar tree and successfully raised one eaglet in 2015. *The First Lady* laid her first egg February 10 this year

followed by a second February 14. Both parents take turns incubating the eggs which are expected to hatch 35 days later.

You can watch the eagles anytime day or night courtesy of two high-definition video cameras from the top of the nest tree. Cameras are powered by a mobile solar array designed and built by Alfred State College, SUNY College of Technology and partially funded by the Department of Energy and Environment.

Tune in live at: <http://www.eagles.org/dceaglecam/>  
The first couple has not released a list of possible names, but fans of Glenn Frey remain optimistic.

#### Monitor Your Official Travel Card

WASHINGTON— GIPSA has received notice that several travel cardholders have fraudulent charges on their travel cards. "It is a personal responsibility to review your monthly statement upon and report unauthorized charges to U.S. Bank," said Ms. Rose Alexander, GIPSA's travel card manager.

Disputes for charges not made by the cardholder must be filed in writing to U.S. Bank within 60 days of the date the charge first appears on the billing statement.

"As a travel cardholder, you assume the responsibility to use the card only for official travel purposes and pay charges in a timely manner," said Ms. Alexander. "You are also responsible for all items billed to your card unless it was reported lost or stolen. Report lost or stolen cards to U.S. Bank: 1-888-994-6722 just like any personal charge card," she said.



## News You Can Use

### Spring Training, Managing Health

#### USAJobs Webinar Set for April

WASHINGTON—If you are ready for spring training but not quite baseball, the first of a series of employee development sessions entitled *USA JOB Overview & Application Process* may be just the ticket. A webinar on the federal job application process takes place April 7 from 2:00—3:00 p.m. (EST)

Participants will learn to navigate the USAJobs website, the application process, and successfully submit their application.

Register in advance on Aglearn using the following link: [https://aglearn.usda.gov/learning/user/deeplink\\_redirect.jsp?linkId=REGISTRATION&scheduleID=46262](https://aglearn.usda.gov/learning/user/deeplink_redirect.jsp?linkId=REGISTRATION&scheduleID=46262)

Before arriving at the Aglearn website participants are encouraged to explore the USAJobs website for familiarization: <https://www.usajobs.gov/>

On the day of the training dial into the conference line, 1-888-844-9904 and use participant code: 6872975#

To join the meeting use the following URL: <https://usda.adobeconnect.com/usajoboverview/>

If you have never attended an Adobe Connect meeting before, test your connection: [https://usda.adobeconnect.com/common/help/en/support/meeting\\_test.htm](https://usda.adobeconnect.com/common/help/en/support/meeting_test.htm)

An overview of Adobe Connect may be found at: <http://www.adobe.com/products/adobeconnect.html#f>

For additional information about the registration process or logging in contact Ms. Aline Assad, Training Specialist and GIPSA Aglearn Administrator, (202) 720-0186 or by e-mail, [aline.l.assad@usda.gov](mailto:aline.l.assad@usda.gov)

Why not swing the bat for a change and give the webinar a try? This could be the season to schedule a trade to the big leagues.



#### AgLearn's Heartthrob Bestsellers

WASHINGTON—The folks at AgLearn remind everyone to know that heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women in the United States and a major health concern throughout the world.



Let AgLearn help you to get educated, make healthier choices and manage your health better with information from these resources to combat heart disease:

***The First Year: Heart Disease: An Essential Guide for the Newly Diagnosed***

This book explains the workings of the heart and related issues through practical examples, FAQs, and illustrations.

***American Medical Association Guide to Preventing and Treating Heart Disease: Essential Information You and Your Family Need to Know about Having a Healthy Heart***

Authoritative and up to date, this information-packed book explains the most common forms of heart and blood vessel disease and lays out practical strategies to get you on the road to better health.

***The Everything Guide to Preventing Heart Disease: All You Need to Know to Lower Your Blood Pressure, Beat High Cholesterol, and Stop Heart Disease in its Tracks***

Arming you with the knowledge and tools you need to fight back against heart disease, this book takes a contemporary medical and holistic approach to fighting the disease and helps you make the changes that can mean the difference between life and death.

***Success with Heart Failure: Help and Hope for Those with Congestive Heart Failure, Third Edition***

Reflecting the most recent developments in congestive heart failure research and treatment, this authoritative guide gives readers enlightened and compassionate insight and important tips for treating this prevalent disease.

## News You Can Use

### Promoting Civil Rights

#### Civil Rights Selected Readings

WASHINGTON—As the nation recognizes Black History month, AgLearn offers these great books to educate you and make you aware of civil rights for all people--whether in the workplace or at home.

##### *Breaking Through: The Making of Minority Executives in Corporate America*



Focusing on minorities who have made it to the top echelons of corporate America, this book profiles minority executives at three different firms who encountered and conquered barriers throughout their careers.

##### *Gay & Lesbian Rights: A Guide for GLBT Singles, Couples and Families, Second Edition*

A complete guide to legal issues of concern to the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community, this book discusses discrimination and the limited protections available.

##### *Mastering Diversity: Managing for Success Under ADA & Other Anti-Discrimination Laws*

The one-stop guidebook covering employment laws, this tool includes court cases, administrative law excerpts and more.

##### *Building on the Promise of Diversity: How We Can Move to the Next Level in Our Workplaces, Our Communities, and Our Society*

This action-oriented book will show you how to allow diversity to be a dynamic contributor to your mission and help leaders break out of the status quo.

##### *Employment Law: The Workplace Rights of Employees and Employers, 2nd Edition*

A practical but rigorous guide to US employment law, this book examines the relevant statutes, judicial

decisions, executive orders, and administrative policies that shape the respective rights of managers and workers at the workplace.

##### *Fair, Square & Legal: Safe Hiring, Managing & Firing Practices to Keep You & Your Company Out of Court, Third Edition*

This book helps human resource and general managers ensure that the personnel decisions they make are legal.

**NEW ORLEANS—A team from the USDA Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights and the Grain Inspection Packers and Stockyards Administration visited the Federal Grain Inspection Service New Orleans field office recently to conduct a compliance review. The team interviewed staff during various shifts and locations at random.**

**“The compliance review provided an opportunity to gain insight into important factors such as leadership, perceptions, cohesion, morale, and the human relations environment, which have direct impact on organizational effectiveness and mission accomplishment. Results will identify organizational strengths and areas requiring improvement. That will help guide leadership planning efforts,”** said Mr. Kevin Smith, director of civil rights for GIPSA.



(From Left to right: Mr. Dechone Bruno, Mr. Clinton Brinkley, Ms. Kaleena Arnold, Mr. Fred-

## News You Can Use

### Telework, Train, Donate

#### Telework Week Set for April 4-8

WASHINGTON—USDA has set a goal of 20,000 pledges and at least one day participation from eligible employees during 2016 Telework Week, April 4-8.

Telework-eligible employees who do not already have an agreement in place must coordinate with supervisors to obtain an approved Telework agreement in order to participate in USDA's 2016 Telework Week.

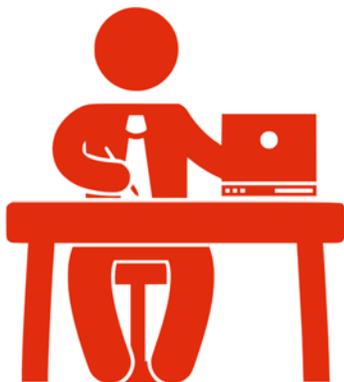
This year all pledges will be made through *USDA Connect*. Visit the site at: <https://connections.usda.gov/communities/community/telework2016> and complete the *Telework Pledge Week Survey*. The survey link will remain open until close of business April 7.

Participants may pledge a minimum of one day and a maximum of five days during this week with supervisor approval. Current teleworkers must still make a pledge to be counted.

Requirements for joining *USDA Connect*, include a level 2 eAuth account and a USDA email address. For details visit:

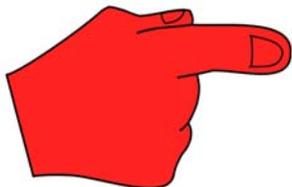
<https://connections.usda.gov>

to generate your profile within *USDA Connect*. Profiles are usually ready within a day.



#### How Protected Is Your Information?

WASHINGTON—Is your personal data really protected? The Department of Agriculture's chief information officer wants to make certain everyone at USDA is trained in protecting Personally Identifiable Information (PII).



As a reminder, please complete the mandatory PII course listed on your AgLearn account by September 30, 2016.

#### Leave Donations Needed Urgently

WASHINGTON—The Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration urgently seeks leave donations for two employees who have exhausted their leave due to illness and injury.

Ms. Carol Carter, a program assistant with GIPSA, Western Regional Office, in Aurora, Colo. has been approved as a recipient under the Leave Transfer Program. Ms. Carter had an accident at home and broke both arms. She is recovering in a rehabilitation facility and is expected to be away from the office for an extended period of time.



Ms. Twala Fair, an agricultural marketing specialist at GIPSA's, Eastern Regional Office, in Atlanta, has also been approved as a recipient under the Leave Transfer Program. Ms. Fair was diagnosed with a chronic illness and exhausted all her available leave to receive treatment. She will also be out of the office for extended periods of time.

Submit leave donations using Form AD-1043 by e-mail, fax, or mail to:

USDA APHIS MRPBS HRD  
Attn: Ms. Debbie Thilgen  
Butler Square 5th Floor  
100 North 6th Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55403  
Phone: (612) 336-3316  
Fax: (612) 336-3544  
Deborah.K.Thilgen@aphis.usda.gov

Form AD-1043 can be found on the web at:  
[http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wps/portal/aphis/ourfocus/business-services?1dmy&urile=wcm%3apath%3a%2Faphis\\_content\\_library%2Fsa\\_resources%2Fsa\\_forms%2Fsa\\_forms\\_by\\_category%2Fct\\_pay\\_leave\\_tod\\_forms](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wps/portal/aphis/ourfocus/business-services?1dmy&urile=wcm%3apath%3a%2Faphis_content_library%2Fsa_resources%2Fsa_forms%2Fsa_forms_by_category%2Fct_pay_leave_tod_forms)

## National African American History Month 2016

### Proclamation by the President of the United States of America

America's greatness is a testament to generations of courageous individuals who, in the face of uncomfortable truths, accepted that the work of perfecting our Nation is unending and strived to expand the reach of freedom to all. For too long, our most basic liberties had been denied to African Americans, and today, we pay tribute to countless good-hearted citizens -- along the Underground Railroad, aboard a bus in Alabama, and all across our country -- who stood up and sat in to help right the wrongs of our past and extend the promise of America to all our people. During National African American History Month, we recognize these champions of justice and the sacrifices they made to bring us to this point, we honor the contributions of African Americans since our country's beginning, and we recommit to reaching for a day when no person is judged by anything but the content of their character.

From the Revolutionary War through the abolitionist movement, to marches from Selma to Montgomery and across America today, African Americans have remained devoted to the proposition that all of us are created equal, even when their own rights were denied. As we rejoice in the victories won by men and women who believed in the idea of a just and fair America, we remember that, throughout history, our success has been driven by bold individuals who were willing to speak out and change the status quo.

Refusing to accept our Nation's original sin, African Americans bound by the chains of slavery broke free and headed North, and many others who knew slavery was antithetical to our country's conception of human rights and dignity fought to bring their moral imagination to life. When Jim Crow mocked the advances made by the 13th Amendment, a new generation of men and women galvanized and organized with the same force of faith as their enslaved ancestors. Our Nation's young people still echo the call for equality, bringing attention to disparities that continue to plague our society in ways that mirror the non-violent tactics of the civil rights movement while adapting to modern times. Let us also not forget those who made the ultimate sacrifice so that we could make our voices heard by exercising our right to vote. Even in the face of legal challenges, every eligible voter should not take for granted what is our right to shape our democracy.

We have made great progress on the journey toward ensuring our ideals ring true for all people. Today, African American high school graduation and college enrollment rates are at an all-time high. The African-American unemployment rate has been halved since its Great Recession peak. More than 2 million African Americans gained health insurance thanks to the Affordable Care Act. The incarceration rates for African-American men and women fell during each year of this Administration and are at their lowest points in over two decades. Yet challenges persist and obstacles still stand in the way of becoming the country envisioned at our founding, and we would do a disservice to all who came before us if we remained blind to the way past injustices shape the present. The United States is home to 5 percent of the world's population, but 25 percent of the world's prisoners -- a disproportionate number of whom are African American -- so we must find ways to reform our criminal justice system and ensure that it is fairer and more effective. While we've seen unemployment rates decrease, many communities, particularly those of color, continue to experience significant gaps in educational and employment opportunities, causing too many young men and women to feel like no matter how hard they try, they may never achieve their dreams.

Our responsibility as citizens is to address the inequalities and injustices that linger, and we must secure our birthright freedoms for all people. As we mark the 40th year of National African American History Month, let us reflect on the sacrifices and contributions made by generations of African Americans, and let us resolve to continue our march toward a day when every person knows the unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.