

BLACKS IN GOVERNMENT ENERGY CHAPTER

Quarterly Newsletter

Oct/Nov/Dec



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Presidents Corner

Vera Dunmore

As the year comes to an end, I would like to say “Thank you to all of our dedicated members who supported, contributed, and participated to this year’s success.” Although we experienced many challenges still, we rise.

During 2021, we focused on self-awareness and self-care by featuring guest speakers in depression /anxiety, domestic violence, mental health, and beginning meditation. We also sponsored two community outreach events to gain visibility for the BIG organization, such as the warm blanket drive and a towels/wash cloths drive for the Prince George’s Men’s Shelter and the Salvation Army Angel Tree program to donate clothes and toys for the holidays to families in need.

We sponsored three fundraising events to gain revenue for the chapter’s operating expenses and to raise funds for our Scholarship program, such as the selling of chapter masks, Black Bean soaps and the Faith Collection candles.

We established a new legislative committee, which was headed up by, Ms. Octavia Gorham-Greenhill to review and analyze all proposed and existing legislation and major employment program policy changes to determine possible unidirectional impacts on Black government employees.

We were able to manage and maintain our chapter’s membership growth while accomplishing our objectives this year. I believe that the dedication and support of the Chapter’s Executive Board in concert with our membership, was the reason why we were very successful this year in all our chapter endeavors.

We developed a productive partnership with other Department of Energy Employee Resource Groups and the Department of Energy’s Office of Economic Impact and Diversity to address training opportunities, and inequality for minorities at the Department with regards to the Executive Order 14035.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude for your support. “The Best is yet to come and Together we are “BIG.”

Good Health (eating right during the holidays)

Denise C. Freeman

The holidays and the end of the year can be one of the busiest times of the year. There are a whole host of things to deal with. From multiple holiday celebrations with family and friends, birthdays, end of year work closeouts, and just whatever life throws your way. When things get busy, we tend to zone into all of the events and to-dos. We can forget about the days in between that are part of our regular routines. It can make us feel overwhelmed as we try to balance everything and oftentimes, leads us to give up on our health and wellness goals. This where BALANCE comes into play. I encourage you to create balance by trying to zoom out and focus on the days that could help you stay on track with your eating and activity. This will enable you to balance the events that matter most to you. Along with that –

MORE movement so that you can enjoy a reasonable portion of your holiday favorites

MAKE healthier food choices as much as possible

MORE sleep – get some good rest during the holidays

And remember, enjoy your time with family and friends. Please exercise caution and wear your masks because COVID-19, the Delta Variant, and Omicron variant are still prevalent. And lastly, “Balance is not something you find, it’s something you create.” – Jana Kingsford

HAPPY HOLIDAYS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR BIG FAMILY!





"Go Back To Work!"

Octavia Gorham-Greenhill
Co-chair, Newsletter
Chair, Legislative Committee
Regional Representative
Co-chair, Newsletter

Yes, that's what I was saying, "every able-bodied person needs to go back to work to help balance our economy." Everywhere I went I saw "we're hiring" ads, so why aren't more people taking advantage of this opportunity to go back to work?

The Covid-19 pandemic struck our country in epidemic proportions. Many of our loved ones lost their lives, such a high price to pay. We are thankful for, the many of us, who made it through!

Our country stepped up, to protect its people by closing dangerous hotspots, allowing people to work off-site, social distance, and wear masks to slow down transmission of the virus. They made sure there were enough testing facilities and large supplies of safe and approved vaccines for everyone. They went on to issue stimulus checks to families and made grants available for small businesses, mortgages/rents, childcare, etc.; created moratoriums to signify the importance and necessity of getting things done. So, now that we are on the better side of a bad situation, why aren't more people back at work?

Well, after a bit of research there appear to be some legitimate reasons. According to Forbes, Inc, 500,000 people were expected to be back at work by October 2021, there were only 194,000 newly employed. CNBC4 News reports that on the surface conditions may seem to be ripe for a boom in the United States' labor market but there are still 5 million jobs less than before the pandemic. According to economists job opens are near a record high. Hourly pay has risen more than 10% in some sectors, however the boom did not materialize after the spring surge. Some of the reasons were:

1. Early retirement.
2. Caring responsibilities--covid out breaks and quarantines.
3. Savings, stimulus checks, enhanced unemployment benefits, increased food-stamp benefits, also, offered temporary relief to renters, homeowners and student-loan borrowers.

Millions of lost positions have yet to return to the job market. Available jobs may also not be in a workers prior occupational field or in their geographical area. Many don't want to travel to the further destinations to jobs that they may qualify for. Some found they spent a lot less money during covid and found a new appreciation for time spent with family. Some may opt to switch careers. There is a mismatch between worker and company expectations. Companies want return in person work full-time, which is fundamentally inconsistent with the flexibility workers want.

So, to sum it up, times have truly changed, never to be the same again. And, there are legitimate reasons why we are not all back to work yet, but we will get there, because this is a great country. And, to maintain what we have created, we must work to replenish and put back into our country. Eventually, asking not what our country can do for us but, what we can do for our Country.

Have A Prosperous 2022!



Veterans Day

Major James Dula, Ph.D.
United States Air Force Retired
Vietnam Veteran

As a young man I had the fantastic opportunity to be raised in a community where life centered around family. From the 1940s to the 1960s it was my pleasure to live daily and learn daily from the World War II and Korean War veterans who returned home from the frontlines of battle to offer their advice and their many experiences to youth who admired them in great ways. Due to the interest they showed to us, we too began to look to the future and a career in the United States Military. For these reasons, I began asking questions concerning military life and set my sights on joining the military.

From an early age I was intent on joining the United States Air Force although my high school graduation took place during the Vietnam War. Young men at that time were subjected to the military draft but many chose to enter the military for economic reasons, for prestige, or simply because it was a way out of life as presented by segregation. I chose the Air Force because, although my father wanted me to attend college, I realized that I needed a little more maturity and felt the Air Force would offer employment as well as an opportunity to live a life with dignity and equal opportunity. Although this proved to be true in many ways, I soon learned the military was a microcosm of civilian life that offered great opportunities with hard work and perseverance.

Realizing the military was an avenue for greater gains in life, I learned the values of hard work, perseverance, education, and setting goals. Within the first couple years I enrolled in college, graduated top in my Air Force Administration Training class, and was assigned as the first black military airman assigned to the highest level of Air Force Intelligence in the Pentagon. From there I continued to apply myself, to dream of what could be and pursued a Bachelor's Degree followed by a Masters Degree and eventually became a well recognized Air Force Commander who served troops in support of the Pentagon, White House, and United States Congress.

The military taught me that, as my Grandmother used to say, "hard work and perseverance pays off". After serving on active duty from 1967 to 1997 and looking back on my career, I could not have imagined I would represent the United States of America before foreign heads of state in foreign lands, I could not have foreseen being selected to provide services for the highest levels of government, and I could not have foreseen becoming a Commander with responsibilities that included Air Force One, US actions in Central and South America, and being part of teams that defended our freedom.

Joining the military was not only a life changing experience.

My goal today is to continue lighting the path for future generations so they will continue the work we began.



Christmas, Kwanza and Hanukah

Lettie Wormley
Chapter Recording Secretary

Christmas

Christmas is a national holiday recalling the birth of Jesus Christ, observed on December 25. It's a religious, and cultural event celebrated by billions of Christians and non-Christians around the world and usually a public holiday in many countries. Even though the date and month of Jesus' birth are not quite known, the church in early fourth century arranged the date to December 25. This date matches the occurrence of winter solstice (the longest night) when the pole of the Earth reaches total number of tilts away from the Sun. Some customs connected with Christmas have a mixture of pre-Christian, Christian, or non-religious basis that vary from country to country. Most popular customs of this holiday include gift giving, Christmas music and caroling; attending a Christmas presentation; exchange of Christmas cards; church services; special meals; showing of Christmas decorations, such as Christmas trees and lights, garlands, wreaths, mistletoe, holly, and a baby Jesus in a manger scene.

There are numerous magically spoken forms, known as Santa Claus, Saint Nick or Father Christmas that are related with bringing gifts to children during Christmas time. Since gift giving and other methods of Christmas promote intense economic activity, this holiday has been viewed as a sales opportunity for retailers and businesses. During the past years, Christmas has had a huge economic impact across the regions of the world. With that being said, let's not forget the "real reason for this season" which is celebrating the birth of Jesus continuing to spread love and peace to mankind.

Kwanza

Kwanza is an African American festival that is less than 60 years old was introduced in 1966 to the United States by Dr. Maulana Karenga, a Black nationalist and later a professor. It is a weeklong celebration held from December 26 – January 1 in honor of African heritage in the African American community, family, and culture. Dr. Karenga created this for Afro-Americans as an answer to the commercialized traditions of Christmas and to give empowerment to the African American community after the deadly Watts Rebellion. Celebrations usually include singing and dancing, storytelling, poetry reading, African drumming and feasting. Kwanza is often celebrated by many in addition to Christmas and is not considered as a religious holiday.

Africans of all faiths can and do celebrate Kwanza, i.e., Muslims, Christians, Black Hebrews, Jews, Buddhists, and Hindus. As stated by Dr. Karenga, non-Black people can enjoy Kwanza, too. Dr. Karenga created seven principles to be discussed each day during the week. These principles and meaning are as follows:

The first Kwanza stamp was designed by Synthia Saint James and issued by the U.S. Postal Office in 1997, the same year Bill Clinton gave the first declaration of the holiday. Also, former president Barack Obama and Michelle, issued a statement in 2011 "to all those celebrating Kwanza." "We know that there are still too many Americans going through enormous challenges and trying to make ends meet," said the president. "But we also know that in the spirit of unity, or Umoja, we can overcome those challenges together."

Hanukkah

Due to the Hebrew calendar being on the lunar cycle this year, the dates of Hanukkah are from November 28 – December 6 and usually change from each year. Hanukkah aka "Festival of Lights" is a Jewish festival that traditionally affirms the recommitment of the Second Temple of Jerusalem during the 2nd century BCE. The Jewish celebrate by lighting of candles of a candelabrum or use of oil lamps, one for each night.

The festivities consist of singing Hanukkah songs, children playing a Jewish game, dreidel, a four-sided spinning top and eating various Jewish dishes. The most well-known of festivities, ranging from family-based or communal is storytelling of those who were victims and prisoners of the Holocaust. During the days of the Holocaust, many Jews in concentration camps found ways to mark this holiday by doing wood carvings of menorah (makeshift candelabrum) and designing wicks from scraps of fat and loose thread. Hanukkah is not a "Sabbath-like" holiday, whereas no obligation is instituted in abstaining from activities on the Sabbath. Other rituals are blessings said before and after lighting the candles, gifts, and food. In addition, many families exchange gifts each night, such as books or games to children.

Hanukkah is a minor festival with few responsibilities about what Jews can or cannot do over the eight days. Nevertheless, the stories of endurance and hope have helped mold the memories and lives of those still living to celebrate the suffering of the ancestors who paved the way to the new life they've come to know and love.



Importance of Supporting a Black Owned Business

Happy Holidays to BIG! Polly's Stump African Art Gallery wishes each and everyone of you a safe and joyful season. Special thanks to those of you who have visited my Gallery and supported my business over the last twenty-five years!

I would like to remind you of the importance of shopping at Black owned businesses. It's a way of building and giving back to your own community and people. The more successful Black businesses are, the more they can contribute to the community through the services they provide, hiring our own and nurturing others to start new businesses. Over the years I have been able to share valuable information on how to start and maintain a business. Please note my address below, take care and surprise me with a visit!

Carolyn Haylock, Artist & Owner
Polly's Stump African Art Gallery
6329 Old Branch Avenue
Camp Springs, MD 20748
301-643-8774

Advancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Accessibility in the Federal Workforce

Office of Economic Impact and Diversity

On June 25, 2021, President Biden signed *Executive Order (EO) 14035, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) in the Federal Workforce*. This EO launched a whole-of-government initiative to cultivate a Federal workforce that draws from the full diversity of the Nation, and advances equitable employment opportunities. The EO reaffirms that the United States is at its strongest when our Nation's workforce reflects the communities it serves, and when our public servants are fully equipped to advance equitable outcomes for all Americans, including our underrepresented and underserved communities.

This EO calls on Federal Agencies to strengthen its efforts to recruit, hire, develop, promote, and retain our Nation's talent, and remove barriers to career and advancement opportunities. The Department of Energy (DOE) is fully aligned with and committed to the Federal Government-wide DEIA Mission Statement, which states: "Across the Federal Government, Agencies will work collaboratively to drive innovation and organizational outcomes, draw from the full diversity of the Nation, and position the Federal Government to serve as a model employer that values and promotes equity for all Americans."

DOE has answered the call with the establishment of the EO 14035 DEIA Implementation Team, led by Shalanda H. Baker, Secretarial Advisor on Equity and Deputy Director for Energy Justice; and Lady Idos, Senior Advisor on Justice, Equity, Diversity, Belonging, and Inclusion. The EO Team is comprised of members from across the DOE enterprise, including Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and union members, to assist the Department with developing and submitting a DOE-wide DEIA Strategic Plan. Thus far, the EO Implementation Team has already written a self-assessment of barriers that may exist within DOE, and, along with all Federal agencies, will be required to submit an action plan by March 23, 2022 to the White House Domestic Policy Council. In the spirit of collaboration and inclusion, the EO Team strives to include the perspectives of the DOE workforce in this process, and strengthen its partnership with all ERGs, such as Blacks in Government (BIG).

As a DOE ERG, BIG provides an opportunity to network, socialize, gain professional development, and raise awareness about issues relevant to Black/African American applicants, employee, and their allies. Through effective partnership, the EO Team and BIG can continue to make strides towards a more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible DOE. Our mutually-beneficial and shared interests include collaborating to: 1) provide safe and inclusive spaces for those who may otherwise feel excluded; 2) establish equitable avenues for career advancement; 3) create networks to connect with and learn from people with similar experiences; 4) increase accessibility to Federal opportunities; and 5) have our community's voices amplified.

The existence of the ERGs, including BIG, is important for harnessing the collective power of DOE's diverse voices, knowledge, skills, abilities, and top talent. Vera Dunmore, BIG President, is currently serving as BIG's primary point of contact on the EO Team. The partnership between BIG and the EO Team is vital for advancing DEIA and positive organizational change. work with BIG leaders and members.



Black Owned Business



With over 15 years of combined expertise with my team of professional travel consultants, and with the resources of Travel Leaders Group, my top priority is to deliver personalized travel services and savings to meet your personal and company's unique travel needs. You deserve the most convenient and hassle-free experiences.

When they said 'exposure is the best teacher' I became a believer in travel! Throughout my journey I have sought lifelong adventures—for both leisure and, as opportunity existed, for business travel. It is not only the love I have to experience new and exciting destinations, but also the quality time spent with family and friends that has meant the most.

It is the personal memories and experiences that help me to guide you—the traveler in making the best travel decision of a lifetime, whether it is for an individual, couple, family or group. When clients allow me an opportunity to customize and propose destinations and specialty travel experiences, repeatedly I see satisfied customers.

My favorite motto is that *"at the end of the day, my working smarter should mean I get to play harder."* That being said, many business travelers indicate that it may not seem like stealing but that is often what they feel they must do to squeeze in a worthy vacation.

Since retiring from the Department of Energy in 2019, my business volume increased such that I consider my profits my 'play money' which allows me to invest more in travel training opportunities which helps educate my clients. While serving a diverse group of travelers, I've found that during this pandemic, they are skeptical and oftentimes confused as to the everchanging guidance that is either associated throughout media (including social media), the Centers for Disease Control and even the State Department's travel advisories (i.e. www.travel.state.gov) as related to COVID and travel advisory threat assessments, etc. As you can imagine, this creates a number of questions relative to safety and risk whether traveling domestic or abroad. I have found by having honest conversation with my clients helps ease their minds. It is more about fostering an honest discussion and cultivating a relationship to last beyond this pandemic. I will continue to pursue my passion—serving others through travel.

Owner/Manager

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Chapter Accomplishments: Oct/Nov/Dec

Guest Speaker - Ms. Rena Boone Beginning Meditation

Angel Tree Program - donated gifts to children in need during the Holidays

Community Outreach Activities - Donated blankets, towels and wash cloth to the Prince Georges Men's Shelter

New Members:

Victoria Little and Melvin Hale

Happy Holidays

See more at: <https://www.big-energy.org>