

My name is Lawrence Prete

I attended New York University (NYU) from 1962 to 1966 and graduated with a degree in electrical engineering. In November 1965, there was the infamous Northeast power failure. Upon my graduation from NYU, because of this incident, I was offered a position by the Federal Government (and a deferment from military service) as an electrical engineer at the Federal Power Commission, which I accepted. My first assignment was with other electrical engineers to determine the cause of the massive outage and how such outages could be prevented in the future. I stayed with the Federal Power Commission until it combined with other energy agencies to create the Department of Energy. During the years I was promoted to a GS-14 Supervisory Electrical Engineer.

During the 1980's, there was a push by the Federal Government for upward mobility jobs from non-professional to professional series. A new professional job classification was created called Electric Power Industry Specialist. This classification was given to employees with no college degree or formal training what-so-ever in electric power. I was interviewed by a classification expert in the Personnel Office and told my classification was going to be changed from a GS-14 Supervisory Electrical Engineer to a GS-14 Supervisory Electric Power Industry Specialist. I explained to the classification expert that I had a four (4)-year Electrical Engineering Degree from NYU and that met the mandatory requirements to be classified as an Electrical Engineer. I had also taken numerous graduate classes at George Washington University and other classes offered by the Department of Agriculture. I was working for the Department of Energy authoring papers and various publications on electric power, writing on the viability of nuclear power plants, and working with the industry on ensuring a reliable energy supply in the United States. I wanted to keep my title as Electrical Engineer. However, I was told that if I wanted to keep my title as Electrical Engineer they would lower my grade to a GS-13, but if I agreed to accept the title of Electric Power Industry Specialist, I could keep my grade GS-14. I elected to keep my grade.

This was the beginning of the dumbing-down of the Federal Government. The bigger problem than changing my title was promoting unqualified employees into the professional job series. For many of these employees I was overruled when it came to their evaluations. For some employees that did not even understand electricity 101, I was told that if I could not rate them higher than I did it must be a reflection on me as their supervisor and I would see that reflected in my rating. I have stories about the incompetence in the Federal Government that would sound unbelievable. So I'll let it go at that.