



From Rural America to Capitol Hill: NASCOE Advocacy in Action

NASCOE recently brought together our National and Area Legislative Chairs, President, and Vice President in Washington, D.C., for legislative training, Capitol Hill visits, and opportunities to engage with FSA leadership.

Divided into three groups, our team met with both Republican and Democratic members of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees to discuss the importance of adequate FSA staffing and the need to consider unrestricted workload demand numbers when determining FY2027 appropriations. These conversations allowed us to share the staffing challenges facing FSA and explain how congressional support can make a difference.

We also met with House Agriculture Appropriations Committee staff and had the opportunity to observe the Senate in session from the gallery.

Beyond our meetings, this trip provided a valuable opportunity for our Area Legislative Chairs to gain firsthand experience with the legislative process, strengthen relationships with congressional offices, and further develop as advocates for NASCOE members.

As we look ahead, we hope to build on this momentum, strengthen our team's advocacy efforts, and expand our outreach when the new Congress convenes in January.

~**NASCOE National Legislative Co-Chairs,**
Amanda Ahrens and Katie Frandrup



Photo of Legislative Team prior to watching a Senate Hearing

From Left to Right: Lindsey, Amanda, Katie, Missy, Jake, Roe, Laurie

On the Horizon

- EC Meeting 1st Tuesday of the Month
- Monitor Farm Bill Legislation, Economic Assistance and Appropriations bills
- PAC Promotion
- Stay abreast of Reorganization Plan
- Quarterly call with DAFO
- Leadership Development Summit
- Programs and Negotiation Submission
- Rollout of Distinguished Service Awards and Scholarship Opportunities
- Programs and Negotiations Submissions



Photo from the balcony of the House Agriculture Committee Chambers

From Left to Right: Laurie, Katie, Lindsey, Kayla, Rick, Missy, Jake, Roe, Amanda.



NASCOE Team wrapping up a full day of training and meeting with House Ag Committee staff.

From Left to Right: Laurie, Kayla, Katie, Rick, Amanda, Lindsey, Jake, Roe, Missy



Jake Taylor - MWA - Back Home Connection

What did you hear or experience in DC that connected most with what our members are seeing in their offices back home?

"I think for me it was truly a full circle moment, a culmination of all the moving parts put into a few days. During our meetings it seemed clear to me that our congressional leaders do seem to care and really wanted to know how things are in the county offices. When we broke down that appropriations have real impacts to the constituents they answer to, and who we serve. More than once the staffers alluded to the fact that they know our job is important and that we are struggling to make our producers lives better. Meeting with staffers for congressional leaders proved that the work we do is important; however the ultimate message gets buried or lost in the mix of things. Having a connection to the people we were meeting with also humanized the situation and made the impact real."

Laurie Thiboutot - NEA - Why It Matters

After experiencing the fly-in, why do you think NASCOE's presence in Washington matters?

"NASCOE's presence in Washington matters as it ensures the voices, experiences and concerns of FSA employees and the producers we serve are heard by decision makers who are working to shape our programs and policies. Advocating in person in this way helps to build important relationships and influence legislation to protect our agency's future and the effectiveness of the programs supporting America's farmers and ranchers."

Missy Merrill – NWA - Biggest Surprise

What surprised you most about Capitol Hill or the fly-in experience?

"During the legislative fly-in, I was most surprised by the numerous connections Congressmen or their staffers had to FSA. They have either used our programs, had a family member employed by the agency or were familiar with the work county office produce. I was also surprised by the empathy and concern we were met with during these visits; many didn't realize the effect the \$84 million cut had on county office staff."



Tour of USDA and Meeting with FSA Leadership

From Left to Right: Missy, Amanda, Roe, Kayla, Bill Beam, Rick, Jake, Katie, Lindsey, Laurie, Steve Peterson

Lindsey New - SEA - Behind the Scenes

What is one thing members might not realize about NASCOE's legislative work in Washington?

"Many NASCOE members may not realize most of the Congressional staffers who intake feedback from organization like ours are young professionals and the roles they fill seem to be ever-evolving. This means there is always a need to share our message with new people as staff and committee assignments change over time."



Legislative Consultant Hunter Moorhead selfie in the House Agriculture Committee Hearing Room

Roe DeLutis - SWA - Memorable Moment

What is one moment or conversation from the fly-in that stuck with you?

"Conversations with congress member staffers were impactful, from the first conversation staff were shocked to hear the numbers previously received for staffing were manipulated to fit the budget cut. We received positive feedback and support when requesting the unrestricted workload demand numbers."