



## National Association of FSA County Office Employees

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### Greetings Fellow FSA Friends October 2023

On behalf of nearly 4,700 members, I would like to introduce you to the National Association of FSA County Office Employees (NASCOE). NASCOE is not a union, but rather an employee association representing county office employees.

In 1958, County Office employees organized state associations to work for employee benefits. In 1959, the state associations formed the National Association of County Office employees. Prior to the formation of NASCOE, CO (County Office) employees did not enjoy the same pay and benefits as their GS (General Schedule) counterparts. In 1962, NASCOE was granted exclusive recognition to represent full-time county office employees in negotiations with management on terms of employment and working conditions.

CO employees are considered Title 7 employees under the direction of the USDA Secretary of Agriculture. GS employees are considered Title 5 employees under the direction of the Executive Branch, the President. Federal employee benefits passed by Congress and signed into law by the President are typically only applicable to Title 5 (GS) employees, not CO employees. Those same benefits are not granted to CO employees until the Secretary officially extends those same benefits to CO employees. NASCOE monitors legislation to request the Secretary extend those benefits to CO employees.

NASCOE is governed by a Board of Directors comprised of two directors from each state in good standing. An Executive Committee is the executive arm of the Board of Directors and is comprised entirely of volunteers elected to represent NASCOE. There are four officers and five area executives elected to the Executive Committee who traditionally serve two one-year terms. Past officers are on the Executive Committee for one year immediately after serving their elected positions.

Our objectives are to assist in every way possible to assure successful operations of FSA and the attainment of FSA's objectives, to cooperate with other groups and associations, to conserve and improve our soil resources, to secure equitable salaries, working conditions and retirement provisions for all county office employees and to promote the professionalism of our employees.

Membership in NASCOE begins at the state association level. When you join your state association, you are automatically joining NASCOE. A portion of the state dues are paid to NASCOE for use on behalf of all members.

Membership is voluntary, but I encourage every county office employee to join. We currently stand at 70% membership nationwide, which is historically low for our association. Our traditionally strong membership percentage gives us a loud voice when we meet with management or with our congressional representatives. However, there is strength in numbers and the larger our membership percentage, the stronger our voice becomes.

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One of NASCOE's roles is to negotiate with management on behalf of membership. This is an annual process where members can participate in shaping the direction of our agency. The NASCOE negotiation team considers items submitted by members for possible negotiation with management. Some examples include increased promotion opportunities for program technicians through the Key PT and the Lead PT positions, increased training opportunities, software enhancements, and items have centered around shared-management operations and striving to improve those situations.

NASCOE also has a legislative consultant on retainer who constantly monitors proposals in Congress that adversely affect federal benefits, activity regarding the Farm Bill and works closely with the Ag Appropriations and Ag Committees to help secure desperately needed funding. Having a consultant in Washington, DC has proven to be beneficial and has resulted in preventing actions that would have been detrimental to our employees.

Please visit the NASCOE website at [www.nascoe.org](http://www.nascoe.org) that provides additional information on the benefits of joining NASCOE. We pride ourselves in offering benefits that are available outside the workplace. In addition, we recently launched a NASCOE App that provides communication that is exclusive to members.

I encourage any county office employee who is not currently a member to join their state association and NASCOE. I also encourage each member to become active in the association, either directly by serving in a representative capacity or indirectly through programs or negotiations processes. Together, as a unified force, we can accomplish great things for our members.

Sincerely,



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