



NASCOE Southwest Area Newsletter

Winter 2022



SWA LEADERSHIP

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SWA Executive

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Tracy Wilson, SWA Executive

Good Bye '21, Hello '22! I hope each of you had a great holiday season and are ready to tackle a new year.

NASCOE has been hard at work with the first order of business being the Organization Meeting that was held in College Station, Texas, September 10-13, 2021. This meeting is where the National Officers, Area Executives and National Chairs meet to build the foundation for the year ahead.

Now that we have a plan in place, the Executive Committee continues to hold monthly Teams Meetings to conduct our regular business. These meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month. As you can imagine, there is never a shortage of things to cover, especially in the environment that we are operating in.

One of the hot topics that the Executive Committee has been working through is finalizing the language for the proposed Constitution and Bylaws amendment. The proposal is to make the Past President and Past Secretary non-voting members of the Executive Committee. Currently these two positions hold voting authority. Upon the creation of a Past Treasurer's position at the National Convention in 2021 a review of the Past Officers roles was warranted after discussion with area membership. The language to adjust the role of the Past President and Past Secretary to non-voting members was completed and finalized during the January meeting. The language will be sent out to the state delegates around January 17th for a thirty-day review period. The Executive Committee will then call a special delegates meeting and hold a vote on adopting the new

language. I ask that you review this language and provide any input that you may have.

I bet I don't have to even tell you what the next hot topic might be, Covid. I really thought after 2020 we might get a reprieve, but 2021 was all there to follow suit. Now here we are in 2022 with no end in sight. With the roll out of disciplinary actions to have begun at the beginning of January, we will be facing some very difficult times ahead. I want to take this opportunity to let you know that your NASCOE leadership understands your concerns and sympathizes with how hard this is on all of us. As we navigate through this next phase of the vaccine mandate, please know that you are not alone and that you are always welcome to reach out with your questions and concerns.

On a lighter note, I am very excited to announce that the 2022 All West Rally has been scheduled and will be taking place May 19th – 22nd, 2022 in downtown Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Our host hotel will be the Sheraton which is located close to Bricktown where there is a plethora of things to do! The specifics are a work in progress so stay tuned for updates coming soon!

The National Convention is scheduled to be held in beautiful Savannah, Georgia, August 7th – 10th. The Executive Committee approved the registration form at our last meeting so that should be rolling out to you soon.

As you can see, NASCOE has high hopes for 2022 and we trudging ahead with our "normal" plans. NASCOE has held several in person meetings, rallies and conventions over the



past year where strict adherence to CDC guidelines were followed. We are proud that we have had no issues and hope to be able to continue to give states and areas the option to continue in person meetings should they choose. So cross your fingers that conditions allow us to continue on with the All West Rally and National Convention, however should things change we will have a plan B and NASCOE will continue to power on.

In closing, I want you all to know that you are very much appreciated for the work that you do. I appreciate you and our producers appreciate you. The programs we administer truly are making a difference in helping our producers survive the continuous natural disasters and market challenges that they face. Thank you for showing up every day and continuing to battle through all that is going on. If at any time I can be of assistance to you, please reach out. I want to know if there is something NASCOE can do to make our work environment better.

Here is one of my favorite inspirational quotes. Just some food for thought....

"Watch your thoughts; they become words. Watch your words; they become actions. Watch your actions; they become habits. Watch your habits; they become character. Watch your character; it becomes your destiny." — Lao-Tze

Terry Cater, SWA Alternate Executive

Happy New Year! The most obvious, single thing that we cannot control in life is the slow march of time . . . so here we go, de ja vu in 2022 all over again!

Here's hoping that every one of you had a safe and joyous holiday season, celebrating in the best ways that you could. This year has started out much like the last in my office. Dealing with NAP grazing losses, wrapping up LFP applications and getting ready for possibly another round because it's been dry. Add to that the reality that we're closed to the public again as another wave of COVID rages across the country.

I know that I have felt some anxiety seeing all of the retirements that were posted online at the end of this last year. Makes me wonder how we're going to get all the work done when we are shorthanded. The reality is that we've been shorthanded for a while now and while the retirements look like a lot, I believe the number isn't quite as scary as feared and the anxiety we're feeling is a social media phenomenon. I was made aware about five years ago that at that point in time somewhere around 80 percent of agency employees were eligible to retire within the next five years. These folks have likely been hanging on a little longer than their earliest retirement dates. In a lot of ways, it's heartwarming to see folks retire and happy to enter the next stage of their lives, celebrating their long careers serving the farmers and ranchers in their communities. We are all working toward that goal!

With folks retiring comes the opportunity to back fill positions and it is the responsibility of us, as NASCOE members, to encourage these new hires to become members themselves. Not every manager these days will slide a FSA-444 under someone's nose their first day and tell them to sign it. It's up to us as representatives and beneficiaries of our organization to tell our story to the new folks coming on board. Let them know the importance of NASCOE as it relates to their pay and benefits. Tell them how NASCOE is the only organization authorized to represent their interests to management, so if they want to have a voice, they need to become members. Tell our new hires about how we're a nationwide family and the friendships and memories you've made getting to know folks from across the country . . . who even though you're miles apart from, you share the same work woes. Not only is telling our story and recruiting new members important to our organization, but it's important to them as employees because of access to benefits they will not be aware of until they are members. Also, it's important to remember, we are an employee association, not a union, so management is under no obligation to recognize us if our membership falls below 50 percent and some of our states, NM included, are on that bubble.

As a bit of housekeeping, please send any updates to the area directory to me. There are still a few states that have not updated their officer and chair contact information and it is very difficult for information to get to the people who need it when we don't know who they actually are. Please send in those updates or any changes to me to be included in the SWA directory as soon as possible.

I would like to extend best wishes for a happy and productive new year! Feel free to reach out if there is any way that I can be of any assistance.

A little food for thought in closing:

"The future depends on what you do today."
— Mahatma Gandhi

Get Ready for the 63rd Annual NASCOE Convention!

August 7-10, 2022

Hyatt Regency

Savannah, GA

Registration Link:

www.nascoe2022convention-reg.square.site



Heidi Clinkingbeard, Awards/Scholarships

I am very honored to serve as your SWA Awards & Scholarship Chair.

I am a CED in Montgomery/Chautauqua County in Southeast Kansas. I grew up on a farm in Morton County in the southwest corner of Kansas. I am married and have my sweet fur babies to keep me company. I've been with the agency for 9 years and been active with my state association since 2017. I've served KASCOE as a district director, 2nd Vice-President, and I am currently wrapping up my run as state President. I have also been involved with the KASCOE legislative, convention, scholarship, and publicity committees. I enjoy being involved with NASCOE and working towards all things that benefit our members. It has also allowed me to form connections with other employees across the country that I am lucky to have as part of my FSA family.

The Awards & Scholarships deadline was January 15th. Overall NASCOE received 77 scholarship applications and 18 DSA nominations. The SWA had 11 scholarships and 5 DSA submissions.

Kansas had 8 scholarship applications and 2 DSA nomination submissions

Oklahoma had 2 scholarship applications and 1 DSA nomination submissions

Texas had 1 scholarship applications and 2 DSA nomination submissions

The state, area, and national judges will be scoring applications over the next month and notifying states of winners shortly after that. As usual, we have stellar applicants this year and it will be a difficult decision for the judges. Thank you to everyone that helped promote, encourage people to apply, and took the time to write up fellow colleagues. This is an easy way of rewarding and acknowledging someone's hard work.

Our NASCOE awards & scholarship chair, Taylor Stucki, updated the Awards & Scholarship handbook to help guide us through the process. The NASCOE Executive Committee has approved a new scholarship this year for part time college attendees so that's fantastic news. Details for all award submissions and scholarship options and amounts can be found at <https://nascoe.org/awards-scholarships/>.

If you have any questions at all, please don't hesitate to reach out by emailing heidi.clinkingbeard@nascoe.org.

Amanda Montgomery, Benefits/Emblems

Hello my name is Amanda Montgomery and I'm from Oklahoma. I'm the Emblems & Benefits Chair for the SW Area. This is my first year in this position and I'm excited to get to work for our members. Emblems by Superior is our official provider of quality apparel and accessories. A percent of every order goes to fund our scholarships. So it's a win win. You get great quality clothes and support scholarships. We are continually looking for more benefits for you. If you have any ideas, reach out to your state chair or myself.

LaCresha Dale, County Office Advocacy

I hope this article is finding everyone coming back from the holidays with much needed rest and family time! I wanted to take this time to introduce myself to the SWA. My name is LaCresha Dale and I am CED from North East Texas. I have four counties and two county offices. I have been a member of TASCOE/NASCOE since day one! This year marked my 14th year with the Agency. I am married and have two boys. One just turned two in November and the other eleven in December. They keep me on my toes! I have held a few positions within TASCOE/NASCOE and now being SWA COAC Chair is a great honor!

So, you are wondering what is COAC? Well it is the same committee as NAFEC just with a little different focus. Yes, we are still here to support NAFEC and encourage you to be an associate member and get your COC's to be members. The main focus of the committee is now to protect, enhance and provide continual education for the COC system for the advancement of membership, employees and the actual COC's themselves with NAFEC. So make sure in those organizational meetings to take a minute to talk to your COC about becoming a member!

Again, hope everyone had a great holiday season and look forward to talking to everyone soon!

Nancy Ensminger, Legislative

Hello All!

I can't believe it is 2022! Ready to put last year behind us and move forward. The legislative committee has stayed busy tracking FY2021 appropriations, relief packages, federal retirement fairness act, and planning goals and activities for the coming year.

FY2021 Agricultural Appropriations included funding for FSA salaries and expenses at \$1.437 billion, an increase of \$22.824 million from the enacted 2020 budget. Agriculture Appropriations bill (HR 4356) was filed on July 21, 2021 which includes a \$32.7 million increase for FSA Salary and Expenses. NASCOE has been diligent showing members of Congress the need to provide funding increases each year which has resulted in considerable budget increases over the last several years.

On Friday, December 3, 2021, the President signed into law H.R. 6119, the "Further Extending Government Funding Act" which includes a short-term continuing resolution that provides fiscal year 2022 appropriations to Federal agencies through February 18, 2022, for continuing projects and activities of the Federal Government.

On December 22nd, President Biden signed an executive order making federal pay raises official for 2022. As expected, federal employees will receive an across-the-board federal pay raise of 2.2%, plus an additional 0.5% locality pay adjustment, for a total 2.7% average increase.

While there have been several State Executive Director appointments made over the last several months, many states are still operating with acting SEDs. The appointments have been a slow process with the new administration.

Reps. Derek Kilmer (D-WA) and Tom Cole (R-OK) reintroduced the Federal Retirement Fairness Act (H.R. 4268) June 30, 2021. The bill, identical to previous legislation introduced in the 116th Congress, would provide certain federal employees the opportunity to make catch-up retirement contributions for time spent as temporary employees after Dec. 31, 1988, thus making such time creditable service under the Federal Employees Retirement System, and for other purposes. There has been no movement on this bill. Getting this legislation passed remains a major objective for our committee in 2021. If the bill is unable to gain traction as it is currently proposed, we plan to attempt another approach that would only make this benefit available to FSA employees.

The NASCOE PAC is vital now with many new members of Congress who need to be educated regarding who and what NASCOE/FSA does for the American Farmer and the stability of the United States. If you are not contributing now, please consider starting an allotment. Just a few dollars a pay period goes a long way in ensuring that NASCOE's voice is heard where it is needed most. The PAC is non-partisan and donations are made to members of both parties. We have a new PAC promotion! We have added a line on the PAC enrollment/increase form to put the name of the person who motivated you sign up or increase. This person will be entered in a drawing for a free one-night stay and free registration fee for the national convention in Savannah GA! Each time a person's name shows up on a form, they will be added to the drawing! The more people someone gets signed up, the better chance of winning. There will be one winner from each area! We also have a few padfolios and backpacks remaining from the previous PAC promotion available. This promotion provides that participants that enroll or increase their contribution by \$3 receive a junior PAC padfolio. Members that enroll or increase their contribution by \$5 will receive a PAC laptop backpack. If you are a member who is already contributing double digits, for a \$5 increase, you can receive both promo items! As of PP 25, the SWA stands at 17% with 172 participants contributing a total of \$954. Participants are contributing an average of \$5.55 per pay period. We are updating our PAC email database. It is our goal to send out quarterly updates that educate and inform contributors how their PAC dollars are used. So, if you are not currently contributing to the PAC, now is the time. You can contact me directly or complete the forms on the NASCOE PAC website at <https://nascoe.org/the-nascoe-pac/>.

A goal of the Legislative Team has been to initiate an outreach advocacy program. This outreach program will encourage our membership to build relationships with congressional members, congressional staff, and agriculture commodity groups at the grassroots level. Stakeholders targeted will be general farm, livestock, crop, and fruit and vegetable organizations. Several states have finalized their team members and have held Teams Meetings in preparation. Kansas (team members are Heidi Clinkingbeard, Chetta Andes and Amanda Ahrens) has been proactive and held several meetings with stakeholders and congressional leaders. They have seen positive results from their efforts. They were able to share their experiences with the attendees at the Focused Leadership Training in Kansas City. We hope to continue the progress with additional states into the new year.

I appreciate the opportunity to serve on the Legislative Committee and represent the SWA. May we always show kindness and gratitude for our co-workers, friends and family and the many blessings we receive.

Breeann Fink, Membership

Hello SWA and Happy New Year! My name is Breeann Fink, I am a Program Technician in the Morton County, Kansas FSA office. I have been a member of NASCOE since I was hired and currently serve as the NASCOE Awards and Scholarship committee chair. I have worked for FSA for three years and although it is a short time compared to most, having previously served as the SWA Program and Negotiations Chair I have gained knowledge and respect for NASCOE and what they do for all employees. I am now honored and excited to be serving as the Southwest Area Membership Chair and work with Glenn Thomas, National Membership Chair to ensure that all members and possible members are accounted for.

In September when I became the SWA Membership Chair Glenn, and I worked to get the updates to membership that were previously submitted loaded into Google Docs so Teresa could upload them to the NID ensuring all members were accounted for and would receive all communication. I could not have completed this without Glenn's help! I believe we loaded around 1000 total updates. We are still missing updated reports from California, Hawaii, Nevada, and Utah – if you need me to resend the listing please reach out and I will get it to you asap!

Teresa then shared the new Membership Analysis Report (MAR) on November 7, 2021. I have sent these updated lists to each state and followed up with the few that we have not heard from again in hopes to get an updated list. Glenn is hoping we will have a new "pull" of employees from FSA within the next couple months. If you have received this list in error or you should be the one receiving the list for your state and have not received it, please reach out to me at Breeann.fink@nascoe.org and we will get all contacts updated.

!!!IMPORTANT!!! Please make sure we have the most up to date contact information for your state especially your president and treasurer. We have a couple states (NM and CA/HI) that are behind on first quarter dues and second quarter deadline is fast approaching on January 10th, 2022. In order to, continue being affiliated and receiving the benefits of NASCOE two things must be in order, your state association must be in compliance with IRS and current on paying your states dues. Again, please contact me or the SWA Executive Tracy Wilson (tracy.wilson@nascoe.org) with any state contact information updates. If you have any questions on how to pay, please contact the NASCOE treasurer Jessi Colgrove (jessi.colgrove@nascoe.org) and she would be more than happy to walk you through the process!

Glenn has suggested that we attempt to have quarterly calls with our state presidents and/or membership chairs. I set up a meeting with the SWA on November 4, 2021 to introduce myself and go over responsibilities and how the process works and to answer any questions. There was not great attendance, but we will try again in a few months to see if we get more engagement.

Glenn updated us on the task force that has been appointed to review the NASCOE responsibility handbook. He asked us to look over what it currently has and see if we can help update it and I believe between all our areas and Glenn we have submitted an updated version of the responsibilities for a membership chair.

As you are all aware this year, we have faced many challenges across all county offices and continue to do so but we all rise up and get the job done for our producers. I can say I am proud to be a part of the work we are doing.

Christa Kraatz, Programs/Negotiations

Hello all, my name is Christa Kraatz and I am your SWA Programs and Negotiations Chair. I am new to this position but not new to NASCOE. I have been a member since day one... that is 15+ years, and cherished everyday since. Knowing that I can keep doing my best, contributing and working hard for you all is an honor. This position gives me the ability to do these types of things day in and day out.

As of Thanksgiving, our area has submitted 27 program suggestions, three of those have been turned over to negotiations, five have been closed and the remaining items have been sent to the National Office and we all are awaiting responses or processing.

Knowing our area keeps thinking outside the box or takes it upon their own to help or suggest more and more ideas truly is an inspiration. I read our suggestions and/or send some in and wonder, "WOW, why haven't I been doing this since DAY one!"

And thanks to you all we kept getting suggestions beyond our first days of work. We have been sending in items that made sure WebTA entries were colored changed between each activity line, we worked or submitted suggestions on CARS so many times that the national office and NASCOE have to keep looking back on what has been suggested before...it's A LOT!!! Oh, and CRP, bless that sweet program's heart...it has more caveats than an owner's manual for a Tesla.

So, please remember that what you might find as trivial or typical workaround needs to be shared and sent in as program suggestions. We all wait for Info Bulletins to enlighten us or justify our frustrations related to program slowdowns but sometimes those same IBs show your hard work in the form of suggestions made into software changes.

Speaking of program changes, or updates, our national program chair, Katie, is super excited that our submission website is getting updated but this transition is slowing our reporting process a bit. However, once completed we all will be thrilled to submit and keep up with all of your programs suggestions coming in for the whole nation.

I look forward to serving our area and helping you all with current submissions and future suggestions. Thanks for caring about what we do, day in and day out. Each suggestion makes action happen and remember that is because of you. So, if you need help submitting or research before hand, please email me at christa.kraatz@nascoe.org.

Proposed Amendment to NASCOE Constitution and Bylaws

At the 2021 National Convention an Amendment to our Constitution and Bylaws was brought to the floor to establish a Past Treasurer position. The original amendment proposal was written to establish this position to include all rights of a member of the Executive Committee. There were concerns with adopting this amendment as written and an amendment to the amendment was proposed to strike the language granting voting authority to the Past Treasurer. The revised amendment was then brought to the floor for a vote and the amendment was adopted.

This amendment spurred some concerns about the existing Past President and Past Secretary positions as they are granted full rights of a regular Executive Committee member. This issue was discussed at the Area Breakout Sessions that were held at the 2021 National Convention. In response to these concerns, the Executive Committee has developed language to amend the current Constitution and Bylaws to make the Past President and Past Secretary Honorary Officers serving on the Executive Committee without voting authority. It is recognized that the Past President, Past Secretary and Past Treasurer is a very important part of the Executive Committee and their invaluable advisory role is integral when it comes to continuity.

The Executive Committee has submitted the following proposed amendment to the delegates for a thirty day review prior to the vote, which will be held February 17, 2022. Please review the amendment and share any concerns you have with your state association so that your state's delegates can take it into consideration prior to casting their vote.

Constitution Amendment

ARTICLE III – GOVERNMENT

Section 3 The Executive Committee shall consist of the four Officers and one member from each Area as outlined in the By-Laws. Alternates from each Area to serve in the absence of the Executive Committee person from his or her Area shall be provided. Election to be as provided in the By-Laws. The out-going President, Treasurer, and/or Secretary shall also **serve on** be a member of the Executive Committee, **as an Honorary Officer with no voting rights**, with full rights and privileges of the other members, except for the out-going Treasurer who will not vote, for a period of one year after their applicable office is vacated provided his or her eligibility as a member of the Association is retained.

By-Law Amendment

ARTICLE IV - ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Section 6 The Executive Committee shall consist of the President, Vice- President, Secretary, Treasurer and one duly elected member **Area Executive** (or the Alternate) from each of the Areas as described in Exhibit 1 to NASCOE's Constitution and By-Laws. The **Past President, Past Treasurer, and/or Past Secretary** of the Association as described in Article III, Section 3 of the Constitution shall also **serve on** be a member of the Executive Committee **as Honorary Officers, with no voting rights, so long as NASCOE regular membership is maintained. Honorary Officers shall serve for a period not to exceed a one-year term after applicable office is vacated.** The Alternate Area Executive Committee person shall serve in the absence of the Area Executive Committee person.

Robert's Rules of Order

§47 Honorary Officers (and Members)

An honorary office is in fact not an office but—like honorary membership—a complimentary title that may be bestowed on members or non-members. When it is desired to honor a non-member, it is more usual to elect such a person to honorary membership. An honorary officer—for example, an honorary president or an honorary treasurer—is often elected at the time of retirement from the corresponding actual office, particularly when the person has filled it creditably for a long time. If there are to be honorary officers or honorary members, they must be authorized by the bylaws. Like an honorary degree conferred by college or university, an honorary office or membership is perpetual—unless rescinded or unless its duration is limited by the bylaws. Rights carried out with the honor included the right to attend meetings and to speak, but not to make motions or vote unless the person is also a regular member, or unless the bylaws provide full membership rights. * Honorary president and vice president should sit on the platform, but they do not preside. An honorary office entails no duties and in no way conflicts with a member's holdings of a regular office or being assigned any duty whatever. It is not improper to include in the published list of honorary officers the names of those who are deceased, if that fact is clearly indicated.