

NASCOE NOW October 28, 2005

“FSA Tomorrow”- Where are we now? It all started with some rumblings of a “few” office closures and ended up with NASCOE working day and night to keep 713 offices open in our rural communities so that we could continue to offer our producers the current high standard of service that they rely on. With a NASCOE Legislative “fly-in”, help from Congress, and negative comments from agricultural groups across the nation the agency was convinced to rethink the “FSA Tomorrow” plan. As talks began between the Agency and Congress an agreement was made but at this time the language of that agreement has not been completely written. By the end of the Appropriations Conference meetings we should know the total language of this agreement. Is our work done? The answer is no. In my opinion we have just completed the easy part and the difficult part is yet to come. At this time it is very important that we stay our intended course. It could be a rough road ahead and your NASCOE leadership realizes that. Let’s all remember how NASCOE operates and that is UNITED. We must continue to work through each issue one step at a time.

I want to thank the National Legislative Committee members for all their hard work, thoughts and accomplishments they made during this past couple of months. Also the state Legislative chairs that worked so hard to get the members in the states working towards this one goal. I hate to say it but I was not a firm believer in CAP WIZ when it was purchased but it has been a very workable and important tool for this type of process. For any member that is not signed on please do so from the NASCOE web site. CAP WIZ gives you action alerts and information on Legislative items that NASCOE is working on and also makes the Legislative process something that you do not have to be afraid or apprehensive about. Please take advantage of this tool and you will see that it has tremendous capabilities for our organization! Trice Smith, Legislative Co-Chair

Check www.nascoe.org for copies of letters from JB Penn to Chairman Goodlatte & Chairman Chambliss about FSA Tomorrow. While your there, check out the latest reports from NASCOE President Dan Root.

Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns today appointed Teresa Coarsey Lasseter as administrator of the Farm Service Agency (FSA). Visit <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/pas/FullStory.asp?StoryID=2208> for the full story.

Senate, House Conferees Agree to Agriculture Spending Bill
Washington, D.C. – The Senate and House of Representatives conferees reached an agreement today on the fiscal year 2006 Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. The conference report will be sent back to both chambers for final approval. Included in the bill is \$17.1 billion in discretionary appropriations. Highlights of the bill are below.

Bill Highlights:

FY05 Funding Level: \$16.83 billion (\$68.293 billion total mandatory)

FY06 President’s Request: \$16.74 billion (\$82.822 billion in total mandatory)

FY06 Conference Report: \$17.09 billion (\$83.067 billion in total mandatory)

Title I – Agricultural Programs

The bill provides \$1.030 billion for the Farm Service Agency Salaries and Expenses, an increase of \$30 million over the fiscal year 2005 level. The bill provides an estimated \$3.784 billion for farm loans, \$66.8 million more than the fiscal year 2005 level. Included in this amount is \$1.61 billion for farm ownership direct and guaranteed loans and \$2.07 billion for farm operating direct and guaranteed loans. Funding for the Food Safety and Inspection Service is \$838 million, a \$20 million increase from the fiscal year 2005 level. Agricultural research and extension programs are funded at \$2.43 billion in FY 2006. Appropriations recommended for the Agricultural Research Service total \$1.266 billion. For the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, \$1.167 billion is recommended, including \$676.8 million for research and education activities, \$455.9 million for extension activities, and \$55.8 million for integrated activities. The Animal Plant and Health Inspection Services is funded at \$820.457 million.

The Agricultural Marketing Service is funded at \$75.376 million; the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration is funded at \$38.443 million.

Title II – Conservation Programs

Recommended funding for conservation operations of the Natural Resources Conservation Service is \$840 million, and increase of \$72 million over the President's request. Watershed and flood prevention operations is funded at \$75 million. Watershed surveys and planning is funded at \$6.1 million. The watershed rehabilitation program is at \$31.6 million. The resource conservation and development program is funded at \$51.2 million.

Title III – Rural Development Programs

The total funded rural housing loan authorization level is \$5.1 billion, including \$4.8 billion for the single-family housing direct and guaranteed loans, \$100 million for rental housing loans, \$35 million for housing repair loans, and \$100 million for multi-family housing guaranteed loans. Funding for rural rental assistance is \$653 million. Funding for the Rural Community Advancement Program (RCAP), which includes funds for water and waste disposal loans and grants, solid waste management grants, community facility loans and grants, and rural business enterprise grants, is increased \$180 million from the budget request level to \$702 million. The bill funds a total rural electric and telecommunications loan level of \$6.094 billion, an increase of \$3 billion above the budget request level. A total of \$50.175 million is appropriated for the Distance Learning, Telemedicine and Broadband program for grants and loan subsidy costs which supports a \$500 million loan level.

Title IV – Domestic Food Programs

The bill appropriates \$12.7 billion for child nutrition programs. Funding for the Food Stamp Program totals \$40.7 billion. This amount includes a \$3 billion reserve, \$140 million for the emergency food assistance program, and \$1.522 billion for the nutrition assistance for Puerto Rico. The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is funded at \$5.3 billion, which includes a \$125 million reserve. The Commodity Assistance Program is funded at \$179.366 million. This includes \$20 million for the Farmers' market Nutrition Program.

Title V – Foreign Assistance Programs

Funding for the Foreign Agriculture Service is \$147.901 million. Public Law 480 programs are funded at the following program levels: Title I - \$74.032 million credit level, the same as the budget request level; and Title II - \$1.150 billion, \$265 more than the budget request. The McGovern-Dole International Food for the Education and Child Nutrition Program is funded at \$100.0 million, an increase of \$13.2 million over the fiscal year 2005 level.

Title VI – Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies Funding for salaries and expenses of the Food and Drug Administration totals \$1.839 billion. This is \$64.9 million more than the fiscal year 2005 level, and includes an increase of \$20.9 million in prescription drug user fee collections, \$6.4 million in medical device user fees, \$2.9 million in animal drug user fees, \$10 million for drug safety, \$7.8 million for medical device review, and \$10 million for food safety. Funding for the Commodity Futures Trading Commission is \$98.386 million, \$4.814 million more than the fiscal year 2005 level. The bill places a \$44.250 million limitation on expenses of the Farm Credit Administration.

Title VII – General Provisions

Total appropriations of \$2.5 million are appropriated for Bill Emerson and Mickey Leland Hunger Fellowships through the Congressional Hunger Center. The Committee bill also includes statutory language to exclude special pay for military personnel deployed to designated combat areas when determining food stamp eligibility.

MEMBERSHIP NOTES Frank Bender NY083FB@aol.com

Today I want to mention just a few real boring items but first - the NASCOE College – Membership Rankings. The rankings show a strong Southeast force – Alabama, Georgia, & Louisiana all looking good. Strong membership – but I am not sure if in the whole southeast area if there is one good quarterback. This week's poll:

- #1. Alabama
- #2. Georgia
- #3. Connecticut
- #4. Louisiana
- #5. Pennsylvania

We dropped Texas – big state but only one football team in the whole state.

Boring stuff:

- Please submit your dues and transmittal sheet to Larry Segars. Yes some states forget to submit their dues.
- In the early part of 2006 NASCOE will be having a legislative conference and just a reminder – NASCOE By-laws state that we can not advance funds to states with 50% of less membership. Work on membership.

The following is submitted from Jenae Prescott from Idaho. The plan is to print some short stories about NASCOE and membership. Thank you Jenae.

MEMBERSHIP AND NATIONAL CONVENTION--- Hello my fellow co workers! My name is Jenae Prescott; I am a PT in the Twin Falls County office – Twin Falls, Idaho. Recently I had the honor of attending my first National Convention in Rapid City, South Dakota. One word comes to mind when I think of this experience – A.W.E.S.O.M.E!! This stands for; Amazing, Wonderful, Energetic, Sensational, Outrageous, Magnificent, and Exciting!! If you haven't

gotten the picture yet I loved it and will be back for more.

The meetings were very enlightening, they were about us; our needs, wants, and concerns. This is our time to express ourselves, that is what NASCOE is about and for – US! Guests from Washington DC (which included Mike Yost - assistant to Jim Little, Doug Frago – Deputy Administrator of Farm Programs, Linda Trease – assistance to Doug Frago, Pat Farmer – Human Resources, and Dennis Tiatano – Budget) talked to us about what is going on in the Agency and in turn they want to know what is going on out here in the County Offices. Talk about some time to speak your mind!! This is probably the only way you will ever get that chance to openly talk to people such as this and get answers that you may not otherwise get. I walked away from these meetings in awe at what had just taken place behind those doors, a whole new level of thinking.

Evenings were a time to have some fun and let your hair down. What a blast!! From “Biker” night (lots of leather going on) with a live band and lots of dancing, to the Costume Ball (were some that wore lots and some that wore little; I won’t tell you which category I fell into!) with more dancing going on there, to Mount Rushmore (talk about patriotic!), to the Formal dinner and dance with a live band to wrap it all up. During those four evenings I met some of the most amazing people from the Agency, people that I would have otherwise never gotten the opportunity to meet. It is amazing the closeness that is experienced there; everyone is greeted with a hug and a smile and when it’s over you are sad to leave them. It’s like a big family reunion (only one that you look forward to attending)!

My message to you if you are not a member is to join now! It really is a great feeling to know that you are part of such a great organization that works so hard for your benefit. There are also those of you out there that have been members forever and have never gone to a National Convention; my message to you is GO – be apart of it – you won’t want to miss another one! And to all of those I recently met - I look forward to seeing you in Ohio! - Jenae Prescott

MEMBERSHIP -Webster’s Dictionary defines Membership as: The Body of Members.

I want to be very clear – I want you to be a member of NASCOE. Please join our association, I can not promise to correct every problem that you have with FSA or being a Federal Employee but I do promise that we will listen and bring your concern to the proper office.

Membership is a powerful tool – the more we have the stronger we are. If you have any questions on membership please contact your state membership chair or if you want the area membership chair.

2005 Federal Employees Health Benefits Open Season - The 2005 Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Open Season will be held November 14-December 12, 2005. The Office of Personnel Management publishes an annual letter of significant plan changes affecting certain plans during the upcoming FEHB Open Season. Some of these events will require action on the part of the employee. Employees are encouraged to review the list for plan changes such as:

- Terminations
- Dropped plan options
- Reducing/expanding service coverage areas, and
- New plans for 2006.

Employees in plans that are terminating as of December 31, 2005, must enroll in new plans during the Open Season if they are to continue FEHB coverage in 2006.

The list of 2006 FEHB significant plan changes can be found at:

<http://www.opm.gov/retire/asd/pdf/2005/05-405.pdf>

In addition, the following web site provides information regarding FEHB Open Season:

<http://www.opm.gov/insure/health/>

The 2006 FEHB non-postal premium rates are found on:

<http://www.opm.gov/insure/health/06rates/>

NOTE: The Flexible Spending Account (FSAFEDS) Open Season will be held concurrent with the FEHB Open Season, November 14 – December 12, 2005. Employees are reminded that if they want to participate in tax year 2006, you must enroll during the open season.

For more personnel issues check out -

<http://capwiz.com/govexec/issues/bills/?billtype==H.R.&billnumb=058&con>. This includes information on Health Care, Pay Increase and Retirement.

AWARDS – SCHOLARSHIPS – EMBLEMS Herb Sorley – Chairman

Debbie Shaw – Emblems....We just wanted to give a short reminder to all NASCOE members that the time to start thinking about nominating someone for a DSA Award. The longer you put it off, the easier it is to forget about it. I would urge you to start putting things together!!!! We would also remind you that the deadlines, nomination form, and the rules for nominations are all on the NASCOE web page. I would ask that you contact your State Chairperson should you require additional information.

Secondly, I would also remind our members that NOW is also the time to start thinking about the NASCOE Scholarship Program. Again, the application and any other information on our Scholarship Program is available on the web page. I would also ask that you contact your State Scholarship Chairperson for additional information.

Lastly, ANYTIME is the BEST time to contact thenascoestore.com for birthday gifts, Christmas gifts, and etc. We would encourage you to go on the web site for any of your shopping needs for our NASCOE Emblems.

It is time to start thinking about our upcoming Awards & Scholarship year with NASCOE. I hope that each of you have been making contacts with your State Chairs. If you have not been, I would ask that you begin doing so ASAP!!!!

Just as a reminder, each Area Chair & State Chair should have the following on hand: (depending on what you are the chairperson of)

- * The NASCOE Awards Manual (revised)
- * The DSA Nomination form
- * The Scholarship Application
- * The Professional Improvement Nomination form

- * The Extra Mile Award Nomination form
- * DSA Score Sheets
- * Scholarship Score Sheets
- * The schedules of Deadlines for both DSA Awards & Scholarships
- * The Awards PP Presentation
- * The Emblems PP Presentation
- * The Scholarship PP Presentation

I have just contacted Diane, our NASCOE webmaster, and she is going to update the Awards Manual on the web site as well as add the PP Presentations to the web site. Please give thanks to Patti McDowell for doing the PP Presentations, she did a wonderful job. I feel that you and your State Chairs can use these presentations for promoting our NASCOE programs.

Please be aware that ALL of the forms, applications, deadlines, and score sheets are on the NASCOE web site. Remind all your chairs of how to get to the web site. They should then send that information on their membership!!!!!!!!!!

NASCOE Publicity...The quarterly NASCOE Newsletter is on its way! This was a Murphy's Law issue if there ever was one. Although the newsletter was presented to the printer on September 27, a series of events occurred delaying the mailing of this issue. I, as the editor, apologize for the unfortunate delay. I also thank you for your patience.
Cindy Peterson

For Your Information...

Northeast Area Executive John Lohr was involved in a vehicle accident which required surgery on his arm and shoulder. John is now in rehab and recovering. For at least the next week, please contact Keith Richardson as my alternate. Get Well Wishes can be sent to John at:

PO Box 59,
Norvelt, Pa 15674
724-853-5555(O) ext 131
742-423-5834(H)

Charolette Saunders is retiring...Former NASCOE Secretary/Treasurer Charolette Saunders is retiring after 30 years of dedicated service! As we all know Charolette also spent those years in dedicated service to NASCOE. Our most sincere THANK YOU, Charolette. Cards may be sent to:

Charolette Saunders
Rt. 3 Box 240
Ripley, WV 25271

or to Charolette's office:

Jackson Co FSA Office
530 Freedom Rd
Ripley, WV 25271-9794