



MASCOE

Missouri Association of County Office Employees Spring 2008

President Dennis Ray
Vice President Kathy Post
Secretary Teresa Bush
Treasurer Cathy Hemme

REORGANIZATION TASK FORCE

Some of you are aware that I sent out a request asking for PT volunteers to serve on a NASCOE task force regarding USDA Reorganization. I thought I should maybe clarify a few things on why NASCOE is putting a task force together on this topic.

Background

During the mark up of the farm bill last spring, Rep. Zack Space (D.-Ohio) introduced an amendment shifting the administrative authority for conservation programs to FSA and leaving the technical authority for conservation programs with NRCS. During that session, sub committee chairman, Tim Holden (D-PA) asked him to pull the amendment since the House Ag Committee was going to address USDA Reorganization in 2008.

Holden said debates over structure should be deferred until 2008. Holden added that Ag Committee Chair, Colin Peterson (D-Minn) has given instruction to hold off any amendments that would affect department structure and to wait until the committee takes up USDA overhaul in 2008.

Holden said that reorganization of the entire department would proceed under separate legislation to be unveiled in 2008.

Where we are right now

While there hasn't been much talk of USDA reorganization since last summer, NASCOE is taking the approach that this topic will probably be revisited sometime after we get a new farm bill.

NASCOE is organizing a task force comprised of a CED and a PT from each of the 5 areas to provide direction to the national officers if and when reorganization is brought back up. Again, please note that the talk during markup was for a USDA Department wide reorganization and not FSA reorganization.

While no knows for sure if there will be an effort to reorganize the department or not, NASCOE wants to be proactive rather than reactive. The national officers are trying to prepare themselves by finding out what direction the membership will want them to pursue if reorganization legislation is introduced.

Dennis Ray

Moran set to propose FERS sick leave reimbursement

By [STEPHEN LOSEY](#)

March 04, 2008

Rep. James Moran, D-Va., plans to introduce a bill March 10 that would compensate more retiring federal employees for a portion of their unused sick leave.

Moran's bill would provide employees retiring under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) up to \$10,000 in compensation. Employees would be paid 10 percent of the hourly average of their three highest salaries for all but the first 500 hours of their unused sick leave.

Employees under FERS currently receive no compensation for their unused sick leave when they retire. The bill is meant to discourage them from abusing their sick leave benefits as they near the end of their careers.

The Congressional Research Service has said sick leave abuse costs the government about \$68 million a year. Once the bill is introduced, the Congressional Budget Office can analyze the costs of paying FERS employees for their unused sick leave.

Employees under the older Civil Service Retirement System are compensated for unused sick leave and, as a result, have far more sick leave when they retire.

Moran will announce details on his bill March 10 at the Federal Managers Association's convention in Arlington, Va.

An early draft of Moran's bill capped compensation at \$5,000. FMA and other management organizations convinced him to raise that limit, saying \$5,000 would not be enough to discourage sick leave abuse. But the groups were not able to convince Moran to raise compensation to 15 percent of the hourly pay average.

MASCOE Convention

This year's MASCOE Convention will be held in Columbia at the Courtyard Marriott. Mark your calendars for August 22-23, 2008. Further details will be released soon so watch your mail for more information. "Take a Chance" and make the convention great in 2008.

Silent Auction Items Needed

MASCOE is again asking for counties to donate silent auction and door prize items for our convention. Counties can send their donations to their board members or to the Boone County Office. We appreciate the generosity of our members as they continue to make our auction and convention a success.

MASCOE Website

Have you looked at the MASCOE Webpage lately? If not, you should check it out. We have made some recent renovations to better serve our members. New additions include a MASCOE Daily Update page, new links and a new look.



Assured Annuities

Buying a lifetime annuity can reduce your risk if living a long time but it increases your risk if dying soon. Say you pay \$200,000 and receive about \$1,300 a month for ten months, then die.

* With a basic single-life annuity, your heirs won't get a thing from the insurer. You'll have paid \$200,000, received \$13,000, and deprived your heirs of that \$200,000.

* This risk can be reduced by buying a "cash refund" annuity. Say you put \$200,000 into an annuity and receive only \$13,000 in payments before you die. Your beneficiary would get \$187,000 back. Your monthly payments will be lower if you specify a cash refund option, though.

* Another option, available to married couples, is to buy a joint annuity. Such an annuity will keep paying as long as either spouse is alive. However, the monthly income might be around \$1,100 a month, not \$1,300, on a \$200,000 investment.

- Another option is to buy a "term certain" annuity, which will pay for at least a minimum time period, to you or a beneficiary. If you buy this type of annuity with a 10-year minimum and you die after three years, the same amount will be paid to your beneficiary for another seven years.

TSP funds earn modest gains in 2007

By Brittany R. Ballenstedt

The three riskier funds in the Thrift Savings Plan posted losses for December, though all five basic funds made modest gains for all of 2007.

Eligibility is determined by your age and number of years of creditable service.

In some cases, you must have reached the **Minimum Retirement Age (MRA)** to receive retirement benefits. Use the following chart to figure your Minimum Retirement Age.

Immediate Retirement:

An immediate retirement benefit is one that starts within 30 days from the date you stop working.

If you meet one of the following sets of age and service requirements, you are entitled to an immediate retirement benefit:

Age	Years of Service
62	5
60	20
MRA	30
MRA	10

If you retire at the MRA with at least 10, but less than 30 years of service, your benefit will be reduced by 5 percent a year for each year you are under 62, unless you have 20 years of service and your benefit starts when you reach age 60 or later.

Early Retirement:

Refers to special eligibility rules as follows:

The early retirement benefit is available in certain involuntary separation cases and in cases of voluntary separations during a major reorganization or reduction in force. To be eligible, you must meet the following requirements:

Age	Years of Service
50	20
Any Age	25

Deferred Retirement:

Refers to delayed payment of benefit until criteria are met, as follows:

If you leave Federal service before you meet the age and service requirements for an immediate retirement benefit, you may be eligible for deferred retirement benefits. To be eligible, you must have completed at least 5 years of creditable civilian service. You may receive benefits when you reach one of the following ages:

Age	Years of Service
62	5
MRA	30
MRA	10

If you retire at the MRA with at least 10, but less than 30 years of service, your benefit will be reduced by 5 percent a year for each year you are under 62, unless you have 20 years of service and your benefit starts when you reach age 60 or later.

Disability Retirement

Disability Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) Annuity Requirements

Age	Years of Service
Any Age	18 months

Special Requirements: You must have become disabled, while employed in a position subject to FERS, because of a disease or injury, for useful and efficient service in your current position. The disability must be expected to last at least one year. Your agency must certify that it is unable to accommodate your disabling medical condition in your present position and that it has considered you for any vacant position in the same agency at the same grade/pay level, within the same commuting area, for which you are qualified for reassignment.

Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS)

There are five categories of benefits under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS). Eligibility is based on your age and the number of years of creditable service and any other special requirements. In addition, you must have served in a position subject to CSRS coverage for one of the last two years before your retirement. If you meet one of the following sets of requirements, you may be eligible for an immediate retirement benefit. An immediate annuity is one that begins within 30 days after your separation.

[Optional](#) | [Special Optional](#) | [Early Optional](#) | [Discontinued Service](#) | [Disability](#)

If you leave Federal service before you meet the age and service requirements for an immediate retirement benefit, you may be eligible for deferred retirement benefits. To be eligible, you must have at least 5 years of creditable civilian service and be age 62.

Optional

Age	Years of Service
62	5
60	20
55	30

Special Optional

Age	Years of Service
50	20
Any Age	25

Special Requirements: You must retire under special provisions for air traffic controllers or law enforcement and firefighter personnel. Air traffic controllers can also retire at any age with 25 years of service as an air traffic controller.

Early Optional

Age	Years of Service
50	20
Any Age	25

Special Requirements: Your agency must be undergoing a major reorganization, reduction-in-force, or transfer of function determined by the Office of Personnel Management. Your annuity is reduced if you are under age 55.

Discontinued Service

Age	Years of Service
50	20
Any Age	25

Special Requirements: Your separation is involuntary and not a removal for misconduct or delinquency.

Disability

FSA and the Next Farm Bill

NASCOE views the development of the next Farm Bill as an immense opportunity for Congress and the Administration to meet agricultural challenges and to provide opportunities for the future. The employees of the Farm Service Agency stand prepared to provide the means for Congress to administer many of the programs and duties provided for in the next Farm Bill. Since the 1930's the Farm Service Agency and its predecessors have been USDA's most efficient and effective agency for administering farm programs. With a grass roots system of locally elected farmers and ranchers serving each county, and a committed staff of county office employees who are accountable to both USDA and the locally elected committee, the system is a shining example of government of the people and by the people. FSA has provided one of the only systems in government where local control and national direction work hand in hand to accomplish the goals set forth by Congress and directed by the President.

As Congress develops the Farm Bill, NASCOE asks that you consider the following suggestions for effective implementation of current and future farm and commodity programs:

- Designate FSA as the sole Agency for the collection of crop acreage reports.
- Utilize FSA resources and skills by appointing FSA the centralized data management agency within USDA.
- Consider expansion of the Noninsured Assistance Program (NAP) to provide needed assistance to specialty crop producers.
- Information Technology Initiatives implemented by USDA should be more accountable.
- With a proven track record in administering payment programs FSA should be assigned any new payment programs developed by Congress such as: Permanent Livestock and Crop Disaster Programs, Crop Revenue Programs, and Energy-Based Programs.

Programs administered by FSA are vital to American agriculture, family farms, and the rural economies of the communities in which we serve. Since 1993 FSA staffing levels have been drastically reduced to a level where our excellent service could be compromised. With the *current level of program delivery* NASCOE feels we must be staffed with 9800 employees. This level will protect our infrastructure, program delivery, and ensure that the required checks and balances are properly executed. In the future we must continue to staff according to our program delivery needs. If a permanent disaster program is developed or a disaster type program implemented we ask that a level of temporary employees be written into the legislation to be aligned with the size of the disaster.

To meet the changing needs of our agency we must maintain integrity in our mandated programs at the least cost of delivery. We must make the most of our limited fiscal budgets and use our resources wisely. We hope you will consider the items contained in this paper for the future of American Agriculture.



IASCOE / IACS / IASE Style!

Join us for the Iowa Convention!

Have you worn out your ice scraper? Have you fallen on the ice and hurt various body parts along with your pride? Have you been having evil thoughts toward the weatherman? No doubt about it ... it has been a long, long, long winter. It's time to take a break!!! ---Join IASCOE / IACS / IASE for a Spring Break!!!!

The joint 2008 IASCOE/IACS/IASE Convention will be held on March 28 & 29, 2008 at the Stoney Creek Inn located in Johnston, Iowa. The Stoney Creek Inn is conveniently located just off I-80/35 and only a few miles from Des Moines. Numerous restaurants, shopping malls, and other activities are just moments away.

The Stoney Creek Inn offers a cozy lodge atmosphere where you can experience the great Outdoors.....Indoors!! Relax by the fireplace or take a dip in Iowa's only year round indoor-outdoor swim through pool.

Friday's activities will include committee meetings and a general session followed by the hospitality room, & a dance. Saturday morning will include breakfast buffet, awards ceremony, raffle and Auction winners, followed by a general session.

Featured Speakers:

Jim Book, STO,
Merlin Plagge, STC Chairperson
Charlene Neukomm, Mid West Area Executive Alt.
Jim Mace, J& M Marketing
Deb Esselman, CED WI, Military Tribute
Craig Floss, Executive Director for Iowa Corn Growers

Door Prizes will be awarded throughout the 2 day event.

For Reservations call: 1-800-659-2220
Special Room Rate: \$77.00(plus tax) per night
(Tell 'em your attending the IASCOE Convention)
March 13, 2008—cut off date for special Room Rates

MAKING THE MWA RALLY GREAT IN 2008

WHEN: April 18, 2008:

Guests begin to arrive:	9:00 a.m.
Golf Outing / Shopping:	11:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Indiana Director's Meeting:	3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Free Happy Hour:	5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Silent Auction Begins:	6:00 p.m.
Indians Baseball Game:	6:30 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.
"Big 10" Sports Themed Dance:	7:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m.

April 19, 2008:

Breakfast served (free for hotel guests):	6:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.
Indiana State Convention:	8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.
MWA Convention:	10:15 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Luncheon at Hotel:	12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.
MWA Convention (continued):	1:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Silent Auction Final Bids:	4:30 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.
Silent Auction Winners Announced:	4:45 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Dinner at Area Restaurants:	5:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Hospitality Room:	7:30 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.

WHERE: Embassy Suites North, Indianapolis, IN

Room rates are \$124 per night plus tax. This includes free Happy Hour and Complementary Breakfast. For Reservations Call: 1-888-EMBASSY (rates good thru March 18th). Use code IAC when booking your room.

Make sure to use the NASCOE travel website, www.nascoetravel.com, for great deals on flights!

REGISTRATION FORM

EDITOR: CONNIE DORL

Dear Members,

Has anyone out there been blessed with Spring yet? It seems like no matter where you live in the nation you have been experiencing a last bout of bad winter weather. At least we hope its the last bout!

What's been happening the past couple weeks affecting NASCOE members?

Eighteen of the 22 offices with zero permanent employees (as of 2/7/7) have been closed during the past two weeks. The language in the Approps bill allowed these offices to close without public hearings and with little notice. Three offices in WV, four in TN, and 5 in TX; with the remainder spread around the country. The reaction I've heard from membership has been varied. The one common concern is for our farmers that may have to travel great distances to receive service. I think this brings the total of offices closed to about 92 or 93 since each state was asked to write a restructuring plan. Farm Bill language will dictate any future office closings.

The task force members charged with looking at USDA reorganization has been very busy. A webpage has been established on the NASCOE web site. [A NASCOE Look at USDA Reorganization](#) - check it out. Read the Task Force report, the Chronology Summary of Past NASCOE positions. Additional resource documents will be added. A Frequently Asked Questions area will also be added. Click on the web-page e-mail button to let us know your thoughts on any possible USDA Reorganization, ask questions or offer suggestions. Membership input is vital to this process. This will be discussed at all of the area rallies.

VP Myron and I will be in WDC March 10&11 for our quarterly visit with management. We have several appointments and two pages of subjects to discuss. We will prepare a report for membership on the visits. We will also be visiting with NAFEC and Bob Redding while we are in WDC. This visit is at NASCOE expense so we try to accomplish as much as possible in a short amount of time.

Many of you expressed your frustrations with AgLearn during the recent required training. We will continue to visit with management on this subject.

States are beginning to schedule conventions. I would encourage you to contact the folks you wish to invite as soon as possible to avoid scheduling conflicts. I plan to attend the All South Rally, the MWA Rally, the NWA Rally in addition to some state conventions. I had a prior commitment so Myron will be attending the NEA Rally along with some state conventions. If invited, I will make every effort to attend your state convention in accordance with the NASCOE Travel Policy.

The Spring NASCOE Newsletter will soon be arriving. Information and registration for the National Convention is included. Plan now to attend! NASCOE Now continues to be published twice a month for your reading pleasure

Diane Holowaty our webmaster informed me this morning that we have almost 500 folks signed up to receive the e-mail updates to the web page. If you haven't subscribed, go to www.nascoe.org and sign up.

Thank you for your membership and support of NASCOE!

Think Spring!

Bonnie

