

National Association of County Office Employees
Midwest Area Rally
March 15-16, 2019, Champaign, Illinois

The Midwest Area (MWA) Rally convened at the I Hotel and Conference Center next door to the State Farm Arena where the “Fighting Illini” play basketball on campus. Delegates to the convention came from the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin. The convention was addressed by a member of Congress, Deputy Administration for Field Operations (DAFO), NASCOE Executive Board, Dillard Financial Solutions, Inc., National Association of Farmer Elected Committees (NAFEC), National Association of Retired ASCS/FSA Office Employees (RASCOE), and the State Executive Directors of Illinois and Indiana.

The convention was welcomed by the MWA Executive Jackson Jones. Jackson describes NASCOE as a professional trade association representing the workforce that delivers agricultural safety net programs locally administered and delivered through locally elected county committee offices. The MWA rally gives membership the opportunity to meet and listen to policy makers, gather background information about the policy, network with other county office employees, and be reminded of the benefits of belonging to a professional group.

Jackson introduced the first speaker of the day, Bill Graff, Illinois State Executive Director (SED). Mr. Graff was previously Illinois SED from 2001-09. Mr. Graff commented on the dedicated and professional commitment of all county office staff in efficiently executing the recent Market Facilitation Program. Mr. Graff encouraged the group to engage in the Stress Training and evaluate it for its usefulness. He also said that with the tremendous amount of flooding going on this spring, we need to get STORM reports completed as it makes it easier for SED and State Office to get disaster declarations. The most impressive point he made was regarding the states of the Midwest and the power they hold. When the Midwest has great numbers in program sign-ups, the national numbers increase. That’s how much of an impact the Midwest makes in farm programs.

Steve Brown, Indiana SED, addressed the convention next. He emphasis that the Farm Service Agency (FSA) always gets it [the programs] done and serves our customers well. He noted the patience of the farmers during the furlough as well as all the comments about the many donuts farmers brought into the offices, showing how glad they were the employees returned.

This sentiment was echoed by Jim Reed, Illinois State Committee Chair. He added to the information with the history of Champaign as being the home of REO Speedwagon, the “Fighting Illini” and the strong agricultural programs of the University including the Morrow Plots which are an experimental agricultural field at the University of Illinois. They are the oldest in the nation and the second oldest in the world. Mr. Reed who farms only 20 miles from Urbana-Champaign, emphasized that he and the farmers understand our dedication and professionalism to serving the farmers.



Jackson Jones getting the rally started.

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Next, Kay Lumsden, MWA Legislative Chair, addressed the group. She introduced the state legislative committee members in attendance, including WASCOE's Jon Williams. She asked each one to give a statement of why the NASCOE Political Action Committee (PAC) is important to them. The PAC opens doors to NASCOE by opening the communication channels with Congress. The PAC is job insurance for our employees. The PAC helps get Congressmen elected who understand the importance of agriculture. It's our voice with Congress to give us an opportunity to work with people who support us. It's tool that we use to get in the system and if we don't use it, we'll be left behind. These were the sentiments from all the legislative chairs.

NASCOE realizes that not every member can attend every association function or convention, but every NASCOE member can make a bi-weekly contribution to the NASCOE PAC to maintain our voice in Congress. A separate payroll deduction is all that is needed to support the PAC. Membership dues cannot be used since federal law prohibits NASCOE from using dues to political purposes. The PAC supports like-minded political candidates by helping them get elected. The PAC is the legal and responsible way to communicate with Congress.

The NASCOE Legislative Committee looks at all the recommendations submitted and makes the decision on which of these to pursue through Congress. NASCOE is represented in Washington D.C. by Hunter Moorhead. Hunter visits with members of Congress and takes our legislative suggestions to Congressmen for action. Important to NASCOE include staffing, workload, benefits, technology, and office closures. For more information, visit the NASCOE website at: <https://nascoe.org/the-nascoe-pac/>

The convention was then addressed by Illinois Congressman, Rodney Davis. Congressman Davis noted that changing words in the farm policy can bring about effective change to agriculture through the Farm Bill. He noted the Farm Bill was passed into law on December 20, 2018 and promptly was overshadowed by the furlough. He was not supportive of the furlough and introduced legislature to prohibit a furlough from reoccurring. The furlough held up implementation of the Farm Bill and development of regulatory rules and software. Implementation was one point he was adamant about. It just isn't happening as he put it. We need to invest more into the infrastructure so counties can move money to help rural areas.

Congressman Davis commented that the Farm Bill is designed to make our jobs easier by creating legislation that is more proactive rather than reactive. It is designed to be easier to implement by streamlining sign-ups, not requiring producers to sign up annually, and improving software delivery. Attracting employees is difficult when federal employees take hits on their retirement and pay raises. Congressman Davis is committed to attract and retain federal workers by providing competitive wages and benefits to federal employees in order to compete with the private sector.



Congressman, Rodney Davis

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Signing of the State Labor Management Agreement by Bill Graff, SED; Jim Reed, STC Chair; and Debbie Staley, IASCOE President.

At the conclusion of the Congressman's address, the Illinois State Labor Management Agreement was signed by Jim Reed, Illinois State Committee Chair and Bill Graff, Illinois SED.

The morning continued with comments by Peggy Browne, Deputy Administrator for Field Operations (DAFO). She and her husband, Bill, co-own and manage a cattle ranch in eastern Oregon. A primary function of the DAFO staff is provide an effective link between the FSA National Office and State and County Offices. DAFO's priorities are hiring, leasing, and shared management. DAFO is working to promote proactive approaches to these priorities versus being in reactive situations. She also stated that this would parallel

farm programs being proactive with programs that address the situations that are currently happening versus having to implement disaster programs after disasters occurs.

Staffing is foremost consideration. DAFO is collecting data on time management: how long does it take employees to deploy the program, identifying bottlenecks in programs, and capturing the time it takes to bring new staff up to speed with farm program applications. The time it takes to deliver the programs will determine the staffing needs in the County Offices. Staffing offices needs to be a quicker and more efficient process. They are currently reassessing how to best staff offices and are actively looking for creative solutions. For example, Missouri has a roaming Program Technician that visits several offices during the week for a day or two each. When asked, the PT said they love their job. These are the kinds of creative suggestions they are looking for. Being proactive in hiring would reduce situations such as having County Operation Trainees (COT's) waiting around to fill positions.

The Shared Management Task Force is looking at "best practices" to make shared management more effective for everyone involved.

Leasing is currently being evaluated. The want to get involvement with leasing back to the county offices. The County Executive Director (CED) needs to be involved. The local staff understands what might need to be repaired in their office and can help identify issues and concerns that need to be addressed when a new lease is being negotiated.



Peggy Browne, DAFO, addressing the rally.

Acting Associate Administrator Operations and Management, Steven Peterson, was introduced. He noted that farmers appreciate our service. He said the Market Facilitation Program (MFP) went above and beyond their expectations. Over 958, 000 contracts were initiated. This exceeded their expectations of approximately 600,000 – 650,000 contracts. Over \$8 billion was paid to the farming community. He assured the membership that Congress respects the

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interaction that we have with producers and that the delivery of the programs strengthens the economy of rural communities.

Peterson announced that farm bill will begin May 20, 2019. He commented on the Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) program. Sign-up will begin June 17, 2019 and payments will start to be issued July 8, 2019. There were changes to lessen premiums to be more cost effective for farmers. Bumps will be frozen so as not to encourage production. There will be refunds for premiums paid between 2014-2107. LGM producers not able to participate in the 2018 Margin Protection Program (MPP) will be allowed to retroactively sign-up be paid a one-time payment.

The Noninsured Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) now has buy-up provisions as a permanent part of the program. Service fees were increased starting in 2020 and the payment limitation was increased to \$300,000 for producers electing buy-up coverage. They are having discussions about 2019 buy-up coverage as now they would be buying up losses.

Payment limitation was removed from the ELAP program and the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) program removed management practice requirements for un-weened livestock. The Livestock Forage Program (LFP) had no changes.

Sign-up for ARC/PLC is scheduled to begin September 1, 2019. Base acres on grasslands will not be eligible for ARC/PLC payments. Producers may take those acres and sign up with the Grassland Program in NRCS. The base will be retained on those acres until the 2024 farm bill. Payment will be issued from the county where the land is physically located. PLC yields will be allowed to be updated for 2020. 2013-17 will be the years that are applicable to the yield updates.

CRP sign up is scheduled to begin December 1, 2019. The legislation is now open for public comment on the policy and/or proposed regulatory changes. Chris Hare brought up several concerns. The CRP rental rates are low, ARC/PLC non-payment acres due to the grassland provision now in the farm bill, and the grasslands program that is now with NRCS. Steve Peterson said that CRP is a program that is for marginal land and water quality issues, and wildlife. They don't want the incentives to take away land from beginning farmers by giving participants large payments for taking land out of production.

Mr. Peterson knows they have failed in the software and technology department. The budget for the previous Farm Bill was \$300 million was available for program implementation. \$15.54 million has been authorized for the current Farm Bill. He also stated they need to make sure applications are simpler.

After a short break to take care of personal business, shop at the NASCOE store, and pick up door prizes, Dennis Ray, WASCOE president addressed the Convention. He had several things to say about furlough. First that the furlough procedures outlined by Washington D.C. were lacking and chaotic. He



Steven Peterson, Acting Associate Administrator Operations & Management

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encouraged each state organization to develop a furlough checklist for the next time. He praised Teresa Holmquist for her tireless efforts during furlough in keeping the NASCOE website updated. There were over 97,000 hits to the NASCOE website in the first 17 days of the furlough by over 36,000 users. Dennis commented that calling back staff during furlough without pay adversely effected membership with unemployment benefits and temporary employment. NASCOE understands the impact producer's face, but they need to lookout for membership and could not support being called back to work without pay. NASCOE wrote a letter to Secretary Perdue with options laid out for creating authorizations to bring back employees with pay. NASCOE worked on federal legislation to give Secretary Perdue more authorizations. One suggestion was to use Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) funds to pay employees and then the federal government could reimburse CCC once the budget was passed.

During furlough the negotiations team kept their pre-arranged trip to Oregon scheduled for January 18-21, 2019. There were over 75 negotiating items on their agenda to consider. 25 of the items were selected negotiation and will be presented to DAFO over Memorial Day weekend. The negotiation team consists of the NASCOE officers, five area executives, and five area consultants (5 CED's and 5 Program Technicians).

Dennis said the Under Secretary wants to get staffing back to the levels we were at three years ago. NASCOE also advocates that workload data be transparent down to the county office level every time they meet with management. CED performance plans need to have more County Committee (COC) involvement. State Office management says that performance plans can be revised at any time.

XI Media Production is creating a high-end video about NASCOE to aid in our efforts promoting NASCOE. Membership is asked to talk about and promote NASCOE, NAFEC, and the PAC. It is up to our membership to introduce themselves to their Congressman and tell them our story.

A legislative conference is currently in the planning stages. It is tentatively scheduled for October 24-26, 2019 in a location to be determined. Dennis did say that it will not be in Washington D.C. NASCOE would like to get new members involved. Even though NASCOE contributes towards state delegates, he said states should start looking at their budgets. Lastly, he said that NASCOE would like to have a legislative conference every three years.

After the awards luncheon, we reconvened for a short presentation by Steve Dillard of Dillard Financial Solutions, Inc. He asked the question, "When was your last financial checkup?" Most people don't review their financial situation regularly. He said that you should review your budget and your benefits statements to see where you are financially.

Steve Dillard provided an overview of the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). Since most people do not understand the different TSP funds, Steve spoke briefly on the five different funds and what makes up each fund as well as the various Lifecycle (L) funds. Steve briefly addressed the changes to TSP that will be effective in September 2019 after the passing of the TSP Modernization Act in 2017. There will be more options for how and when you can access money from your TSP account. The changes affect both

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in-service and post-separation withdrawals. More information about these changes can be found in the TSP fact sheet TSPFS10.

Dillard Financial Solutions, Inc. offers one-on-one services to help prepare you for retirement with services such as retirement and benefits analysis, and yearly reviews just to name a few. They also offer various products to help you in retirement. There are many employees that are early in their careers, he said. Those employees may not be as interested in talking about their retirement at this point according to Steve. Rather, they may be interested in the lifestyle analysis workshop that Dillard's offers.

The National Association of Farmer Elected Committees (NAFEC) was up next. Dennis Kuhlengel, NAFEC member since 1977 and COC member for 21 years, provided background about himself and explained why NAFEC is important and what it means to him. NAFEC Treasurer, Bob Braden, was the next to speak. He explained that NAFEC is important because it represents the employees. Because NAFEC is made up of farmers and not employees, they cannot be pushed around like government employees. He went on to say that NAFEC because of the inconsistency within the organization, members come and go, and committee members change every three years, they don't have a solid listing of members. Through various resources and avenues, they are currently working to establish a database of members.

Mary Behm, National Association of Retired ASCS/FSA Office Employees (RASCOE) webmaster and benefits chair, spoke about how RASCOE is only as good as its membership. Wisconsin is third in membership followed by Illinois in fourth. Only Georgia and South Dakota have more membership at first and second respectively. Mary went on to say that we need to take the time to make personal contact with employees in order to reach them. Their website is <https://rascoe.org>. On the website you can find phone number and email contact information. They are looking for suggestions for their website and newsletters to make them work for you. If you have any ideas, please contact Mary Behm. RASCOE piggy-backed with other organizations to help get a bill introduced that would repeal the Windfall Elimination Provisions. They work to preserve our benefits and to make sure you have those same benefits when you reach your retirement.

There was a presentation by Ken Thompson, Blue Cross Blue Shield representative. He said that Blue Cross Blue Shield is here to help us understand our health benefits. He said that many people do not open their mail they receive from them and are missing out on important information and benefits that are available to them. They have some general presentations available as well as presentations available to learn about taking your health benefits into retirement. These can be done either online or one-on-one. In 2019 they will offer several wellness webinars. They will focus on "Embracing a healthy heart," "Health Insurance 101," and "Obesity." There will be three sessions a day for these webinars. There will also be webinars available during the open season. He said that premiums will be lower in 2019. There is also a new plan called, "Blue Focus" which is designed for your needs and your budget.

Mary Roberts, Midwest Area Alternate Executive, spoke about her development into this her new role as the MWA Alternate Executive. Her first task that Jackson Jones, Midwest Area Executive, gave her was to work on updating the Midwest Area Directory. For those of you not familiar with this directory, it contains a list of all the officers and committee chairs for the states that make up the Midwest Area. This is a great reference tool for contacting anyone in these positions with your questions, ideas, or just would like to see how others do things to make things more efficient. The task of updating the directory

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turned into a task that would become larger than she anticipated. Getting updates timely was a challenge because of changes in positions due to retirements, new elections, etc. Please check out the directory at https://nascoe.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Combined-Directory_2018-19.pdf and send her any updates that you have.

Jackson Jones, Midwest Area Executive, brought up three important issues. First is the Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) Business Center. While the rumors surrounding FPAC have settled down, stated Jackson, we do not fully know and have not seen the full impact yet of the FPAC Business Center. It has created another level of bureaucracy to deal with and we do not know what to expect at this point. Slowly we are seeing changes to how we do business. These changes impact staffing and the hiring process as well as program delivery. Some believe we, FSA, should move to a more regional delivery of programs. However, we really are not set up with the infrastructure to do this. Jackson also said that our USDA offices provide more services than people realize. An example was a time when a customer was in his office that was having problems because he was considered deceased! Apparently, he had the exact same name as a deceased individual. Jackson was able to provide the requested legislative contact that the customer was seeking. He also said that NASCOE should be at the table when big decisions are being made by management. Many state office's think that NASCOE is an obstruction and we are here to create trouble. NASCOE is classified as a trade organization and we are only expecting there to be open and honest dialog to protect our trade. USDA service centers are the only government offices that are locally serving customers and delivering our programs.

The second issue Jackson spoke about was the shutdown. According to Jackson, the shutdown in January was the third shutdown he has seen. Technically there were several others, but they lasted only over the weekend and we didn't even see any effects to those. In 2013, the shutdown lasted 16 days and in 2018 one lasted 3 days. However, this one lasted 33 days. It was stressful on employees and customers because of the uncertainty and confusion it brought. Questions such as how long it would last and whether we would get back pay were asked. Many wondered how they would support their families and pay their bills. As CO employees, we were employees that were classified as "excepted." This mean returning to work without pay. During that time, we were working without state office and IT support. Some state offices had calls prior to the shutdown, but many did not. Clear direction was not available to employees to provide clear direction to have an orderly shutdown process. When information was available, it was inconsistent across the agency or even lacking to other employees. NASCOE was fielding many questions from members. Many asking, "What does NASCOE do?" NASCOE was busy working to get news and press releases out to membership and to get answers to the questions that were being asked. NASCOE was busy working to stop employees from having to return to work without pay. Jackson said the NASOCE website had 97,000 hits from 36,000 users during the shutdown. What did we learn from the shutdown? We learned that we need to update our Employee Personal Page (EPP) passwords, get documents needed to apply for unemployment benefits, create personal budgets so employees can manage through and be prepared for any future shutdowns. He also said that any employee that used their local food bank during the shutdown to pay it back so other less fortunate families can utilize the services if required.

The third concern that Jackson addressed was about hiring and the hiring process. USDA is the only place in the federal government where someone can appeal an adverse decision to their local

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committee, which is comprised of members from the local area. He stated that there is a growing trend to take away some of the hiring process away from the local offices. An example Jackson provided was that one state office is selecting a set number of applications that the County Executive Director will receive and interview regardless of the number of applications that were submitted. Another state office was selecting applicants that had college degrees. They want the hiring process to return to the county office.

Jackson spoke about the process of State Associations paying their quarterly dues and changing the process from mailing the dues through the postal service to an electronic ACH process. This will alleviate the opportunity of checks being lost or delayed in the mail. Each state treasurer should look into this with their financial institution. If you so send it through the mail, priority mail should be used as a tracking number is provided. He also stated that dues need to be paid timely. If the fourth quarter dues are not paid by June 30th each year, states will not be seated at the National Convention.

Jackson continued on with our association and its tax-exempt status with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Each year, Curt Houk, NASCOE Treasurer, receives a report of which states have complied with the requirements of being tax-exempt by filing the 990N e-postcard or applicable form. NASCOE is updating their bylaws to say that states must remain in compliance with the IRS to be a member in good standing. We would like to inform our membership that Wisconsin met this requirement by filing the 990N e-postcard on October 10, 2018 for the tax year ending June 30, 2018.

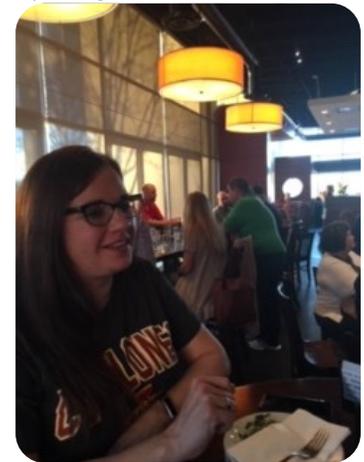
Wisconsin's tax-exempt status was reinstated on August 6, 2018 after a lengthy and arduous process.



Houlihan's Social Mixer

Jackson would also like membership to be careful when using social media and be aware and conscientious of what they post and say on social media. We are all representatives and employees of the government. There were several members who were contacted and spoken to about what they posted on social media during the shutdown.

The convention adjourned for the day. Attendees enjoyed great appetizers at the hotel restaurant followed by a great band and dancing after the day's convention activities.



Mary Roberts enjoying the social mixer after the first day!

The second day of the MWA Rally convened with report from each committee chair.

- **Marilyn Dunn, Awards Committee:** Scholarship applications were down this past year. There were 31 applications over three types of scholarships. Highlights include: Kristin Oliver from Wisconsin was awarded a NASCOE traditional scholarship. Tom Oasen, CED, received a plaque for 3000 hours of sick leave. Three other Wisconsin members received certificates for various amounts of accrued sick leave. Congratulations!

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- **Jon Williams, Benefits:** Jon said that it is getting harder to find unique benefits as everyone gives discounts. Jon updated us on the continuation of the Sam's Club benefit. Unfortunately they are not returning his calls. JM Marketing is dropping some of its benefits.

Available member benefits are listed on the NASCOE website. Benefits highlighted in this portion of the program were Working Advantage which provides discounts to hotels, theme parks and attractions, movie tickets, etc. Please visit: <http://workingadvantage.com> and login using the NASCOE number printed on back of your WASCOE membership card

The furlough was a reminder that the membership should have a savings account ready for these unexpected events. Dillard Financial Solutions, Inc. has developed a Lifestyle Planning Workshop that could be used to help you in your financial planning or included as a Convention workshop for all membership.

- **Jon Williams, Emblems:** Emblems maybe purchased from NASCOE by Superior. 15% of the money from emblems goes back to NASCOE. Last quarter \$4700 was raised from emblem purchases. Please provide any ideas for new designs.
- **Kay Lumsden, Legislative:** The legislative committee works tight with the NASCOE Board. On the NASCOE website, there is a power point on the PAC. Unfortunately, there is a negative perception regarding the PAC. Learn more about the PAC on the website. Please support the PAC by contributing with a separate payroll deduction. It is an insurance policy promoting NASCOE with like-minded legislators.
- **LeAnn Oltmanns, Membership:** The Midwest Area has 81% of FSA staff belonging to NASCOE. The challenge is to raise this to 85%. Don't forget the third quarter dues are due by April 10.
- **Mary Roberts, NAFEC:** This organization continues to make legislators aware of the importance of the County Committee system and local control of the county offices. Craig Turner, NAFEC state chair wrote a letter to Secretary of Agriculture Purdue supporting NASCOE and county office employees during the furlough. NASCOE members are encouraged to join NAFEC as a member or associate member. Membership packets were sent in November and in February. She is hopeful that information will be shared with the County Committees. She said that NAFEC has a stronger voice than we do. For information regarding NAFEC, visit: <https://www.nafecfsa.com/>.

Mary said they are working to get their membership list current. The only way to communicate with members by email so please get their email addresses to her as well as what county they are in. Let her know if states are limiting the amount of COC meetings being held.



Jon Williams providing updates on benefits and emblems.

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- **Debbie Staley, Negotiations:** 25 items were selected for negotiations with DAFO over Memorial Day weekend at the pre-negotiation meeting in Portland, Oregon. On the NASCOE website you can submit your concerns under “negotiations.” This is a wonderful way to take your concerns to management. Please submit items by December 1st. One item that was negotiated in the past was for employees to get full credit of their sick leave towards their annuity.
- **Jamie Garriot, Programs:** NASCOE Program Efficiency Submission. This form is located on the NASCOE website to recommend improvements for program delivery. Issues of concern may be submitted at any time. Timing could be critical to program efficiency. It is not necessary to wait for negotiation/consultation time. These items will be acted on upon receipt.

44 program suggestions were submitted by March 8th. 22 suggestions were from the Midwest Area! Wisconsin did not have any suggestions. We are encouraged to submit suggestions now that we have a new Farm Bill. The challenge is to have five submissions from each state by the National Convention in August.

- **Kathy Roberts, Publicity:** Kathy is in her first year as publicity chair. She set a goal of three newsletters each year. The first one will be after the Rally. States should put out at least one newsletter annually.

Members who have never attended a National Convention could get a \$500 stipend in the NASCOE Convention Cash Club. NASCOE members in good standing must write a one-page essay of 500 words or less on the theme, “Denim and Diamonds” and how this theme applies to you and your involvement in NASCOE. Submissions are due by April 15, 2019. Winners of the stipend must attend the National Convention in Manhattan, Kansas and be present for all general session activities and the awards banquet or they will forfeit the stipend. For information, visit: <https://nascoe.org/publicity/convention-cash-club-contest/>

State Presidents presented their reports.

- **Illinois:** Finished their state convention the day before the MWA Rally. 146 people preregistered for the convention. They had a lot of assistance putting on the convention. Illinois membership is at 86%. Their board is interested in a meet and greet with membership and has been moving the convention around the state. Illinois is revising their bylaws, creating a new IASCOE membership brochure, and creating temporary job descriptions for committee reports.
- **Indiana:** They are also in the process of revising their bylaws. They met with the State Committee and presented a labor/management agreement. They are working on updating their website and also have a cookbook fundraiser going on. They have 198 members. Area boundaries were updated as well. Current concerns are staffing, workload, hiring process, and the right-sizing of offices. They discussed leasing issues with county offices. They mentioned the opportunities and headaches associated with the transition of PT’s to COT’s then to CED’s.

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- **Iowa:** They are under their employee ceiling by 19 employees. At the moment they are just waiting to advertise vacancies. They are putting together an overnight orientation for newly hired employees. Membership has increased by 35 members.

Iowa was concerned about the government shutdown and the hiring procedure for PT's and CED's. The State Office is providing the county offices with candidates that have been screened by the state office. Not all names from the submissions to the job announcements are making it to the county office. This is a concern because new hires may not meet the needs or understand the culture of the county office.

- **Michigan:** They had a board of directors meeting in January. Their SED is open to NASCOE and their concerns. They are working on putting on CRP cost-share training for their employees. The first weekend in May is their state convention.
- **Minnesota:** Membership is at 92%. New employees receive a membership packet when hired. They are working on keeping better track of the increase of dues when employees get promoted. Colin Peterson has reached out to MASCOE as he farms in Minnesota. The State Office view on CED vacancies is to wait until the COT's are ready so there will be a larger pool of candidates. They will be meeting with the STC on April 11th.
- **Missouri:** Boasts an 82% membership rate. They are hoping to reach 90%. During the Skills for Success Training, MASCOE hosted a gathering to discuss NASCOE membership benefits. This resulted in seven new members for their efforts. Next year Missouri will host the MWA Rally.
- **Ohio:** They are at 85% membership. They have had a significant number of retirements. They have four COT's onboard with 14 CED vacancies, most of which are in the southeast. Bylaws are also being reviewed and updated. They are voting on establishing a new membership dues rate structure. In 2018, OASCOE raised \$3000 in scholarships through generous donations.
- **Wisconsin:** Membership is at 67%. While new employees are becoming members, we are also losing many members to retirements. Wisconsin is trying various strategies to increase membership. New hires are mailed an information packet, jump teams go to county offices with low membership and attend a new employee orientation; providing pizza and soda while discussing the benefits of membership. Communication is not good with the SED. WASCOE is not allowed to address the state committee. A newsletter will be printed annually and the President is mailing out to County Offices for the upcoming state convention on April 26, 2019.

Candidacy announcements were made for the following offices:

- Midwest Area Executive – Jackson Jones, CED, Iowa
- Midwest Area Alternate Executive – Mary Roberts, CED, Iowa
- NASCOE President – Brandon Wilson, CED, Kansas
- NASCOE Vice President – Marcinda Kester, CED, Florida
- NASCOE Secretary – Richard Csutoras, CED, Pennsylvania
- NASCOE Treasurer – Curt Houk, CED, Iowa

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Membership was cordially invited to the 2019 National Convention “Denim and Diamonds” in Manhattan, Kansas, July 31-August 3, 2019. This will be the 60th NASCOE convention. Upcoming Convention locations: 2020 National Convention - Savannah, Georgia, August 8-13, 2020.

A bid was placed by Fort Wayne, Indiana for the 2021 National Convention - Grand Wayne Convention Center. Dates to be announced.

The MWA Rally ended with an open floor discussion on concerns and topics such as staffing and the hiring process, shared management, and activity reporting. These issues are a concern for some because some states are only starting to transition to shared management, while others states that have been using shared management have CED’s managing up to four offices! The hiring process takes too much time and some state offices are selecting which candidates CED’s will get to interview.

Activity reporting is a hot topic because there isn’t an accurate way to tell what is getting done and how much time it takes. Employees end up putting in extra time that is not captured in WebTA, because they need to get the job done and serve the customer. There is also a large discrepancy in the data because each office or state can code the same task under different activity codes. The open forum provided and opportunity for questions and comments relating to any topic or issue that was on someone’s mind.

Respectfully submitted by your 2019 MWA Rally Delegates,
Shelby Niskanen and Jon Beam



Representing Wisconsin: Jon Beam, Shelby Niskanen, Jon Williams, Jodie Groeschel, and Teresa Zimmer!