

The General Session meeting was called to order at 9:15 a.m.

Prayer, the National Anthem, and the Pledge of Allegiance followed.

Vice President, Angie Christian, gave opening remarks, including housekeeping items and introduction of President, Jesse Wegner

Jesse welcomed all to convention and recognized new attendees.

Iowa FSA SED, Amanda De Jong also gave opening remarks:

- Amanda thanked all attendees for coming. She also thanked all employees for their efforts during and after the furlough. Efforts were not unnoticed and were appreciated. Employees came back to work under confusing times. At the end of the day, everyone showed up. There were compliments from many regarding this fact. Thank you to all employees for being flexible.
- Amanda expressed that we have a huge workload coming down with the new Farm Bill. There are questions regarding reduced funds allocated for training. However, we will have training. Alternative funding sources are being looked at for this.
- There will likely be a Dairy signup in June; ARCPLC signup in September or October, and a General signup in December for CRP. No decision has been made yet on practices, acres, etc... Amanda has conveyed to the National Office that they need to be mindful of our workload, as well as NRCS workload. Everyone acknowledged that is true.
- Amanda discussed the flooding. Congress is considering a supplemental Disaster bill. This is moving in a positive direction. Weekly reports will be requested to present to Congress. It is anticipated that additional snow melt could exacerbate the situation. Some jump teams may be asked for throughout the state; our own FSA family may need help this year. Our Iowa spirit is to help our brothers and sisters in need. Amanda will be going to the flooded areas next week. The images are heartbreaking, and it is evident that help is needed.
- Amanda discussed the need for training; intellectual knowledge cannot be passed on after employees leave. Amanda has received helpful ideas on this from Jesse, on the behalf of IASCOE, such as the new PT training which will take place. Our budget is limited; but, the better we train, the better we do. While phone calls and webinars are good, they can be easily interrupted. This is one reason why Amanda has made laptops a priority for Managers.
- Amanda thanked all of the associations for having her there today. She has been traveling around to various CO's, and she hopes to have an opportunity to hear from all employees.

Jackson Jones, NASCOE MWA Executive, next discussed NASCOE updates:

- Jackson encouraged all to get involved with NASCOE. Since starting in his leadership role on September 1st, he has gained good leadership and other skills.
- FPAC Business Center: Jackson is still unsure as to how it will impact our daily operations. It has created a new level of bureaucracy, as it has elevated some STO operations, including leasing and some outreach efforts.
- Shutdown: We were told it would be different than what we have seen before. It felt confusing, and many felt lost. We got called Excepted Employees via memo and were told we would work without STO, DD and IT support for a week. No direction was given on an orderly shutdown. Excepted was a new definition, and every state was told different things. NRCS was told some things. No information was given on how to apply for unemployment or which documents would be needed. However, NASCOE was the leadership that was there for help, as they were not furloughed. It was a very busy time for NASCOE. A transmittal was due, and scholarship deadlines came up. But, they were working for the employees during this time. The NASCOE website received 97,000 visits by 36,000 people during a two-week period in January. By comparison, the website received

approximately 40,000 visits during the entire 2018 year. NASCOE was doing all it could do. Many conclusions may be drawn, including whether we are prepared for another shutdown should it happen in September. Do we have the documents at home that we will need? Jackson believes we're setting up for possible future shutdowns. The President has asked for additional wall funding in his budget.

- **Hiring:** Merit based hiring has gained some traction. This would limit managers' ability to sort through applications, as the computer system would eliminate applicants who do not have experience processing FSA contracts, etc... IASCOE is of the opinion that managers should be able to sort through applications at the local level instead of a computer screening them out. Some STO's are forwarding on only a limited number of applications to managers. Some are even going as far as to set up interviews for the applicants with the local manager.
- **Leadership Training:** NASCOE desires to prepare its members for leadership. A conference will be held in October for this purpose, and new attendees are to be sent to represent IASCOE. The information learned should be brought back to the state. At least two people from IASCOE should attend. The venue will most likely be KC or Dallas, as those two cities are often the cheapest in the nation for hosting a conference.
- **Taking Information Back:** It is important that IASCOE convention attendees take the information they learned here back to their offices. This makes your registration fee more valuable by making it multiply.
- **Membership Video:** Chris Hare put together one that was so well received that NASCOE is doing a new one. It will be produced by XI Tech and will be a high-end product. The company is offering NASCOE a very large discount. Normally, videos of this caliber would be \$10-\$12K; however, NASCOE will be charged only \$5K. The production crew will travel, take footage, and interview members.
- **Imperative to Ask:** Remember it always important to ask people to join IASCOE/NASCOE. As new employees onboard, we must share association information with them and then be sure to ask them to join. Sales training teaches this; don't forget to seal the deal!
- **NAFEC:** Membership has payed huge dividends for some CO staff in the Midwest pertaining to personnel issues. NAFEC is a very important association for COC's and should be promoted to them.
- **Negotiations:** There is an online portal on the NASCOE website for submitting suggestions for improvements on programs. NASCOE goes through the suggestions one by one. Some items get vetted for smaller negotiations, some get passed onto the legislation committee, etc... However, this is one of the greatest benefits of NASCOE for PT's. Furthermore, an employee need not be a NASCOE member to submit ideas. This year, NASCOE decided to combine its negotiations meeting a membership jump team. They convened in Portland, Oregon, as membership is relatively low in the Pacific Northwest. However, the shutdown happened, which halted their plans since CO's were closed. The trip was too costly to cancel, though, so they still met in Portland.
- **Results of the Shutdown:** FSA lost some good employees as a result of the shutdown. IASCOE did not support employees being called back to work without pay and drafted a memo to that end. It was met with mixed reaction from the National Office and the Department. For times like this, contributing to the PAC for their legislative outreach can have huge dividends, as well.
- **Hatch Act:** Employees should be reminded that we are bound to the Hatch Act, and as such, we are limited to what political information we can post on social media platforms. This became an issue during the shutdown.

President, Jesse Wegner, next gave IASCOE updates and accomplishments:

- **Annual Agreement Signing:** The officers met with the STC yesterday for the annual agreement signing. Challenges and successes were discussed.
- **Upcoming New PT Training:** Jesse appreciates the SED and Chiefs working to make it happen. We used to have many statewide trainings; but, due to budget constraints, they are fewer and farther between. Employees should take advantage of the opportunity.
- **Programs Submissions through the NASCOE website:** We get to negotiate as a Government agency with management on how to serve our customers better. This is a unique opportunity, which again can greatly benefit PT's, who are working daily in the software. Keep the suggestions coming!

- Free Membership Opportunity: CO employees who have not been past members qualify. A 444 form must be completed. Dues for one year will be reimbursed. 40 plus members have taken advantage of this opportunity, and we will build on that new membership for years to come.
- Shutdown: IASCOE kept members informed during the shutdown. MFP and loan activities were in great demand during the shutdown, and we, as employees, merely wished to serve our customers. IASCOE and NASCOE did a great job during this challenging time. It is reassuring that an association worked so hard on our behalf.
- Trip to DC for the State of the Union Address: Jesse represented IASCOE, as Rep. Abby Finkenauer's special guest. The trip came about during the week of January 21st amidst being called back to work during the shutdown. Jesse heard many stories of how this was going to adversely impact employees. Consequently, Jesse made calls to aids of Congressional Representatives. He received a call back from Abby and had a meaningful half hour discussion with her, including sharing the stories Jesse heard from employees, such as having to pay for daycare while not being paid and traveling long distances to work. Abby then invited Jesse to be her guest at the State of the Union Address. This demonstrates that personal stories do matter, and elected leaders need to hear from you. NASCOE allowed Jesse to amplify the message. Together, we can work to make a positive impact on our communities, doing the work we love.

Administrative Officer, Bob Wegand, and Administrative Specialist, Tammy Zanoni, gave a training session on Employee Benefits. Please see training slides attached.

Lunch was next served, along with an Awards presentation. Please see Membership and Scholarship/Awards Committee minutes for complete listings of these awards.

Dillard Financial Solutions, Inc. next presented:

- Dillard presented IASCOE with \$1,000 for their convention.
- Changes for 2019 pertaining to TSP withdrawal options in retirement were discussed.
- Myfederalretirement.com was recommended for almost any question you might have on financial planning for retirement from the Government.
- Dillard also explained that they are licensed Federal Consultants and would be offering one-on-one consulting opportunities throughout the convention.
- Dillard recommended that employees should be saving the extra 6.9% (from a decrease in taxes and a COLA raise) of our income. This will help us plan for shutdowns or gaps in our income.
- Dillard stressed that "Financial Checkups" are important, such as reviewing your benefits statements.
- The differences between the TSP fund types were discussed, including a fund that will be added in September, the "L Fund". For all fund types, administrative fees are very low. You will pay 5-7 times more in fees when using private stock brokers.
- Dillard compared Traditional IRA's and Roth IRA's.
- Dillard explained options for TSP withdrawals in retirement.
- More detailed, personalized information can be obtained at the one-on-one meetings; be sure to bring your spouses to these meetings.

Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield then presented:

- BCBS has been the #1 Federal carrier for health benefits for 58 years.
- A demonstration on the BCBS website was given for finding in-network providers in the US and abroad.
- Comparisons between different BCBS plans were discussed, as well as how to get started with the feblue App.
- Signing up for MyBlue was encouraged.

The State Office participated in a Q&A Session. Please see separate minutes from this session.

Mary Roberts, MWA NAFEC Committee Chair, next presented on NAFEC:

- CED's received an email in February regarding NAFEC. The goal of NAFEC is to support the COC system and COC authority. It is important that COC's know and understand what their authority is. The COC system is the only grass roots local system that exists in Government.
- The dues are very low.
- In order to keep COC's relevant, it is important to have them meet as much as possible, as budget allows. Mary ensures that her COC meets at least 10 times per year (each month, with the exception of May and October).
- There has never been a more important time than now to ensure that the COC system is protected. NAFEC wrote a letter of support during the shutdown. It also worked with a legislative consultant in DC during this time. It has a stronger voice than staff.
- Mary is happy to talk to your COC's about NAFEC. Bob Braden is also a great resource for talking with your COC's.

IASCOE Convention—Saturday, March 23, 2019

The General Session was called to order at 9:20 a.m. The Pledge of Allegiance followed.

President, Jesse Wegner, thanked all attendees for coming. He also thanked numerous others:

- Vice President, Angie Christian, for her diligent convention planning and role as VP
- Secretary, Wendi Denham
- Treasurer, Judy Dameron
- Directors, the direct voice of membership, especially for their efforts to get the message out during the shutdown
- Steve Luke, outgoing Benefits and Legislative Committee Chair, and Mary Roberts, incoming chair of that committee
- Committee Chairs, including Michelle Uthe and Susan Lange (Membership); Tammy Eibey (Publicity); Kathy Henely and Jennifer Comer (Awards and Scholarships)
- Special guests, including Dillard Financial Solutions, Inc., Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, Andrea Carroll (Emblems), all who helped and gave support for the auctions, Randy Tillman for coming from IL and doing audio and visual, Jackson Jones for coming from MO and motivating the members, and Mary Roberts (NAFEC).

Next, Jackson Jones gave additional opening remarks:

- National Convention: July 31-Aug 3 in Manhattan, KS. Consider coming to this event.
- MWA Rally will be in Branson, MO next year. Consider coming to this event as well.
- NASCOE aims to be good stewards of your NASCOE dues. An audit is conducted each year to ensure this. Kathy Henely was recognized for conducting an audit, and it was probably the most thorough one NASCOE has ever had. It also saved NASCOE a lot of money. Thank you, Kathy, for your work on this!

Dillard presented door prizes.

Committees gave reports from their meetings on Friday, March 22nd. Please see committee minutes for details.

Judy Dameron motioned to adjourn the General Session. Angie Christian seconded the motion, and the session adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Wendi Muir Denham
IASCOE Secretary