

2011 Convention

March 25 & 26 2011

West Des Moines

General Assembly Friday, March 25, 2011

The general assembly of the annual IASCOE meeting was called to session at 2:45 PM on Friday, March 25 at the West Des Moines Marriot hotel.

The meeting was called to order by President Cindy Mensen. Cindy gave a warm welcome to all attendees. Cindy recognized our out of state guests including:

Kathy Post – MO	Tony Augustine – IL
Myron Stroup – KS	Dennis Ray – MO
Brandon Wilson – KS	Randy Tillman – IL

Cindy then introduced **Myron Stroup** – NASCOE President from Kansas. Myron thanked us for the opportunity to speak at our convention. He encouraged us to “think outside the box” for ways to solve the current budget crisis.

“We have bullets coming at us from all directions”. These include issues such as pay freezes, hiring freezes, and furloughs. We have a target on our backs.

But he states that we have nothing to be ashamed of as a government employee. We are regarded as the CAN-DO agency. We have the respect of our producers and those in Washington DC. Myron feels that many things that we hear are politically motivated. When NASCOE assesses a real threat to our agency, our leadership will step in for us.

According to Myron, there are 2 kinds of cutters: those who make sensible cuts and those who make irresponsible cuts. He credits FSA employees for their hard work and for what we do every day.

On the Farm Bill – the Senate may be the first to write the draft of the Farm Bill. We have what he calls the perfect storm – high commodity prices and a robust ag economy. That may paint a target on direct payments as funding and spending needs to be cut.

75-80% of Farm Bill spending goes to Nutrition – and that is immune to cuts.

Our message at the Legislative Conference was how we can save money and we need to build on that message. This lack of a permanent budget is weighing us down.

He reminded us that our County Committees are what makes our system work and encouraged all to consider supporting NAFEC.

Budget – In three words – it’s a mess. HR 1 calls for a 15% cut. When you look at Salaries and Expenses, 85% is salary and 15% is discretionary spending including rent and supplies. Both chambers are working on a compromise bill prior to current Continuing Resolution ending. If all we lose is our COLA’s – it would be good.

26 states requested 30 Key Program Technician positions. NASCOE wants to watch this. There is a new sum committee formed for reviewing PT classification and upward mobility for PTs.

Myron thanked us all for our support of NASCOE and encourages us to be active members.

At this time, Cindy took a minute to recognize Past Presidents, COTS, and retirees who were in attendance at Friday’s session.

The Iowa State Office specialist each presented their “top Ten” Questions and Answers:

Dennis Olson- Dennis spoke specifically on Share Point. He wanted to let us know how popular the site has become. He shared many tips for navigating around the site and how to set alerts so that you receive email notices about updates. He encourages all employees to contact the STO if there is anything that you would like to see posted there.

Patti Murray - Patti has a list of top ten questions that she most frequently is asked. Her biggest question concerns age and service for retirement – at 62 with 5 years....60 and 20.....55 and 30. How much can I earn after retirement – up to \$14,160. How long can I keep my money in TSP – until 70 1/2. When is my lump sum annual leave paid out after I retire? – paid out one PP after your last PP. Patti indicated that there is a retirement dashboard posted on Sharepoint so that you can estimate your annuity.

Kevin McClure – Kevin spoke about NAP – ACRE – DCP. He also spoke a little about the NEW Business File that will soon replace the S36 Entity File. This will be more real time. He also congratulated our offices for the 2008 SURE program. They received only ONE appeal throughout this program and he credited county office staff for that.

Vicki Friedow – Vicki spoke about Soil Rental Rates, Mid-contract Management, and the Primary Nesting season as some of her biggest issues. She thanked us for our input on CARS and mentioned that several of our suggestions have already been accepted and changed in the program.

Jim Book – Jim spoke briefly about the new methods of determining land value for Facility Loan Program per Notice FSFL-75. He also indicated that his area was taking charge of BCAP – and it is a tough program to administer. He will be retiring this week and he spent a few minutes reviewing his time with the agency and thanked all for their friendship and support over the years.

At this time, we presented 2 Distinguished Service Awards.

The first award was given for Service to FSA-Agriculture – winner was Patricia Mildensteiner from Ida County. Patricia was honored for her hard work for her fellow employees and her producers.

The second award was presented to Steve Kennedy for Service to NASCOE/IASCOE. Steve has served in many capacities over the past few years and was very deserving of the award.

Steve was also recognized by Dennis Ray – MWA ALT Exec – and received the Midwest Area DSA for Service to NASCOE.

The afternoon session adjourned at 5:00 following the presentations of the DSA awards.

Evening activities included a celebration with retirees Mike Craft and Jim Book. We were entertained by the outstanding group Sheltered Reality and later danced to DJ Ray.

Saturday General Session, March 26, 2011

Saturday session began at 8:00 AM with a wonderful buffet breakfast being served. At approximately 8:20, a representative of JM Marketing spoke to the group.

Mike Fruin – JM Marketing – Mr. Fruin gave an excellent talk on how to make the most of all dollars to maximum our retirements. He discussed the need to protect your health and your wealth. He spoke of “green” dollars and “red” dollars.....those that are tax-free and those that we may taxes on. He gave us suggestions on how best to maximize our FERS, Social Security, TSP funds, and any other income.

At 9:00 AM the Awards Ceremony began. IASCOE scholarships were awarded first. We had five scholarship winners this year due to a tie in scoring. The following were awarded \$300:

Collin Schmidt – Harlan	Marie Pistek – Britt (UNI)	Nicholas Winter – New Hampton
Jenna Manternach – Manchester		Jessica Leyh – Sumner

Collin Schmidt was present for the award and spoke briefly about himself and his future plans!

Mary Lageschulte presented membership awards to several counties. She also presented Lifetime Honorary Memberships to many of our retirees – several of whom were in attendance. Sick Leave awards were announced and certificates handed out.

At 9:30 President Cindy Mensen presided over the Opening Ceremonies. The invocation was given by Steve Abbas, Franklin Co CED. Boy Scout Troop #43 from Urbandale – St Pius X presented the colors. Our National Anthem was led by Rex Wittrock, CED from Buena Vista County. Daniel Curry, COT, recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

The IASCOE officers and directors were presented at this time. New Officers: Jeff Davis – President, Cindy Pistek – Vice-President, and Judy Dameron – Sec/Treasurer. Cindy Mensen was presented with a Past President’s pin for her service. Many thanks were expressed to Sue Beemer, the outgoing Sec/Treas. for her 10 years of service.

Committee reports were given by the following:

Scholarships/Awards – Tammy Pruin	Membership – Mary Lageschulte
Publicity – Cindy Pistek	Benefits & Legislation – Dee Lehn & Kelly Cain
Programs– Jessica Yuska	Emblems- Chris Greider

Mary Lageschulte made a motion to accept the committee reports as given. Motion was seconded by Jeff Davis.

John Landgraf was next on the agenda and he spoke to the group concerning membership in NAFEC, the National Ass. Of Farmer Elected Committeemen. This group supports us very strongly. The COC system is the basis for our employment. Iowa does not have very many active members. IASCOE sent letters to all Iowa COC members and advisors explaining what NAFEC is and what they do – in an effort to increase membership. John also reminded us, as employees, of the importance of what NAFEC does to support us. He encouraged all of us to join this organization - \$20 for associate dues.

Dennis Ray – Midwest Area Alternate Director was next on the agenda. Mr. Ray is from Perry County MO and has served as a field reporter, PT, COT, and became a CED in 1991. Mr. Ray stated that in the beginning of his career, he was a “comfortable” member of NASCOE. He paid his dues and attended a few meetings. He decided that it was his turn to become active and start carrying his share of the load. He encouraged all of us to do the same. Take responsibility!

Mr. Ray gave us a few highlights from the Midwest Area Rally. It was well attended with approximately 130 people present. Mr. Michael Wooden, Deputy Administrator for Field Operations, was supposed to attend the rally. But with the tightness of our Budget, he did a phone presentation with the group. When talking about budget, he gets a “sinking feeling in his gut.” As best as he could tell at this time, our FY2011 spending is less than FY10. He is hoping the hiring freeze will be only temporary. John Lohr, NASCOE VP spoke at the rally as well. There is a potential for a joint National Convention for 2014. He stated that the MIDAS team is optimistic and enthused about the changes to come. The Legislative Conference was attended by 200 NASCOE folks and half of those were new to the process. All Midwest States participated in the Negotiation Process by sending many good suggestions. The committee spent four days in California getting the items to be proposed ready. He also promoted CAPWIZ and the NASCOE PAC.

After a short break, Jeff Davis – Vice-president welcomed us back. A new resolution was presented to the group by Mary Lageschulte, membership chairperson:

“Be it resolved that the IASCOE Membership Committee recommends a dues increase for associate members from \$25.00 to \$30.00 effective July 1, 2011.”

Cindy Mensen motioned to approve the resolution as read. Motion was seconded by Kelly Cain. The motion passed on voice vote.

John Judge – STC chairperson spoke briefly. He has completed his first year as STC chair. He thanked all the great staffs and COCs that he met during his visits. He stated that Service Center employees have earned the respect in their counties. He has already helped to hire 18 COTS out of 170 applications and 60 interviews. He has visited 100 offices. The biggest issues we shared with him were: 1. Programs are becoming too complex 2. Tell us at the county office about a program before it is written about in all the newspapers and magazines. 3. Don’t change the rules midstream 4. Always questions about budget. He stated that our administrator is committed to keeping county offices in place and staffed.

He thanked the PTs for their work.

1. Appeals – amazingly small number of appeals on 2008 SURE and he wants us to know the STC supports the PT and COC as often as they can. They make decisions as best as they can.
2. COR- he is concerned that there is no budget for them and we need those folks to help us keep program integrity.
3. He praised Gary Lamb, another STC member, for being a calm, thoughtful spokesman for American Agriculture. With that, he asked Gary to speak to us.

Gary Lamb – STC member stated that this may be his last convention as he is undergoing some medical issues. This is his 11th year as a STC member. He knows that farmers are deeply appreciative of FSA staff. He understands that county office employees don’t always like the rules and regulations that we administer any more than the farmer does. He feels that “we have the greatest set of employees in the

nation.” Gary encouraged us to search your conscience and get involved. We can change things if we hold tight to our principles. He borrowed a phrase from JFK – “Ask what we can do for the Farm Service Agency – ask what we can do to teach America about food.” We help provide food to a hungry world. Be proud of our part in that process. Thanks and God bless.

Our next speaker was **John Whitaker** – State Executor Director. He began by thanking us as we are part of the front line of the food supply. We support the American public. He wants us to know that he learns from the Hot Issues that we submit every week. He looks at each and every one of them so he encourages us submit things that are causing us issues. He sends them to Washington. We just don’t have time to do things that don’t make sense. He used the travel log and the sign-in logs as examples.

Bring common sense ideas to him. Put your ideas on Share Point.

He does not know budget –wise how things are. He will be cutting back and not visiting offices to save travel money. He wants to support our county office people in any he can and he knows our administrator feels the same way. He will support employees.

Jared Schmidt from Farm Financial Services Inc. was our next speaker. He gave a very informative presentation on “Why Farmers Create Trusts”. His group is made up of 15 individuals who work only with farm families, helping to keep land in the family. They are not attorneys or accountants but work to educate farm families. He spoke mainly about three types of trusts: Testamentary, Revocable, and Irrevocable. It was very informative and drew many questions from office staff as this is the kind of thing we deal with on a daily basis.

At the conclusion of his presentation, New President Jeff Davis made some closing remarks. IASCOE board of directors had agreed to office 2 free room nights to convention attendees in an effort to increase attendance. The rooms were both won by COTS! Patrick Derdzinski and Natalie Segira. The \$50 gas card donated by EJ Brown and Associates was won by Mary Steffens. Cash raffle winners were:

\$200 – Vicki Heeren

\$100 – Kari Barker

\$25 – Cheryl Anderson

\$25 – Winifred Reis

\$25 – Judy Dameron

\$25 – Karen Thimmesch

Steve Kennedy made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Karen LaCour seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 12:00 noon.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Dameron