



# NASCOE: What You Need To Know

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**NASCOE.ORG**



# What is NASCOE?

In 1958 county office employees organized state associations to work for employee benefits. In early 1959, the State Associations formed the National Association of County Office Employees. NASCOE is the national affiliate of the various state associations. It is governed by a Board of Directors composed of two members from each state. An executive committee is the executive arm of the Board of Directors. Dues are nominal and are paid through an individual's state association.

Our objectives are to assist in every way possible to assure successful operation of FSA and the attainment of FSA's objectives, to cooperate with other groups and organizations, to conserve and improve our soil resources, to secure equitable salaries, working conditions, and retirement provisions for all county office employees and to promote the professionalism of our employees.

**Since 1962, NASCOE has been granted exclusive recognition to represent full-time county office employees in negotiation with management on terms of employment and working conditions.**

## Associate Membership

Many state office employees, county committee persons, District Directors, temporary employees and retired employees choose to participate in and support NASCOE as an Associate Member. Associate Members share in many of the same benefits available to regular members and reap the rewards of NASCOE's active legislative work on federal employee issues.



# Recent Legislative Accomplishments

## ✓ Secured Funding Above the President's FY 18 Budget Request for FSA Salaries & Expenses

Funding to operate and fill agency positions remains NASCOE's top priority. Our team has avoided recent budget proposals that would have eliminated 592 FSA county office employees during fiscal year 2018. Congress included language specifically mentioning no decrease in county office staffing. In addition, these funds have allowed the Department of Agriculture to lift the hiring freeze and begin hiring new employees. The salaries and expenses funding level are set annually and require our association to justify the spending levels and compete against other stakeholder groups for limited federal funds.

## ✓ Advocates for Staffing

NASCOE is your advocate and voice sending the message to the Secretary of Agriculture, FSA's leadership and Members of Congress regarding the importance of county office staff. Recently, NASCOE representatives, through the Managerial Cost Analysis Working Group, worked with FSA leaders to develop the new workload measurement tool. This tool is being utilized by both the Department of Agriculture and Office of Management and Budget to determine proper staffing levels. This process, including additional salaries and expenses funding, will allow FSA to fill or hire up to 1,000 positions. The new hires will be announced through three phases and will include external positions. NASCOE will continue to seek funding from Congress to increase state ceilings.

## ✓ Opposed Implementation of the Central, Branch and Satellite (CBS) Office Restructure/Closing Plan

Our organization's legislative efforts led to legislation prohibiting the implementation of the Central, Branch and Satellite office restructuring plan. While we are prepared to assist FSA with restructuring options, the decisions need to be based on both location and actual workload.

## ✓ Secured Funding for Monthly County Committee Meetings

Our legislative team secured funding to ensure county committee meetings can be held as needed.

## ✓ Prevented the Transfer of Salaries & Expenses Toward IT Initiatives

Secured legislative language to ensure salary and expense funding is not transferred from personnel/staff accounts toward technology investments.

## ✓ Works to Maintain Employee Benefits

Worked with members of Congress to ensure the FERS annuity continues to be based on the employees average high-three, rather than a proposed high-five calculation. Recent pressures to negatively modify federal employee benefits have failed to pass congress due to advocacy of employee groups such as NASCOE. Our legislative consultant constantly monitors proposed legislation for changes that may indicate member benefits are at risk. Because federal benefits are an important recruitment tool, members of Congress are constantly educated of the importance of solid employee benefits packages for the recruitment and retention of high quality FSA employees. The NASCOE Legislative Committee works closely with NASCOE's Benefits and Membership committees and stands ready to act when membership benefits are targeted. These and similar issues come up every year and require constant vigilance.

## ✓ Opposed Direct Reassignments of Staff

Our team endorsed legislative language ensuring that FSA staff are not reassigned to various office locations with no justification.

## ✓ Promotes County Committee Authority

NASCOE's legislative team continues to promote county committee authority and oversight as a measure to improve accountability and integrity for supervision and program delivery.

# Continued Legislative Accomplishments

## ✓ Engaged in FPAC Reorganization

We continue to keep our finger on the pulse of FPAC reorganization to make sure our members and employees are represented in this effort to establish Secretary Perdue's customer service initiatives.

## ✓ Monitors Farm Bill Processes

The Legislative Team continuously advocates for and monitors the Farm Bill reauthorization and implementation process. Often, the most well intentioned legislative proposals would negatively impact production agriculture or FSA's program operations procedures. Our work ensures that members of Congress better understand the impact of amending current law and how it impacts county office employees. Our goal is to assist the Legislative Branch by enacting legislation that remains workable and provides an effective safety net for farmers and ranchers.

## ✓ Legislative Consultant

NASCOE's leadership works closely with our consultant to identify our legislative priorities and monitor governmental affairs activities. This work includes advocacy before the U.S. Senate, U.S. House of Representatives, White House and Department of Agriculture. The activities include monitoring legislation that impacts both farm programs and employee benefits.

## ✓ NASCOE PAC

Currently, we have about 750 NASCOE Political Action Committee (PAC) members with a goal of growing it much larger to ensure we remain politically active and effective. NASCOE's PAC is a tool that has become necessary to protect and advance positions that directly affect our employees and customers. Our PAC is a non-partisan PAC and we use funds to help elect and re-elect individuals who support our priorities and production agriculture.

## ✓ Partnerships

Through NASCOE's legislative advocacy and outreach efforts, we have established legislative coalitions and partnerships to support NASCOE's mission and agenda. We have stressed the importance of our membership working to build grassroots relationships with agricultural related organizations and elected officials. Educating and advocating NASCOE's mission and objectives are essential to making these partnerships effective and beneficial.

## ✓ Legislative Advocacy Outreach

The NASCOE Legislative Committee developed a Congressional Outreach Program for states to facilitate building local congressional relationships on a grass roots level. This project included congressional contact information, talking points and a general white paper to encourage members to build relationships at the local level. This is an ongoing project where members can become more involved in NASCOE and in the legislative process at their own pace and comfort level.

## ✓ Legislative and Leadership Conference

NASCOE provided the opportunity for 150 members (99 first time attendees) to receive NASCOE leadership and legislative advocacy and outreach training. Members were given a presentation by the NASCOE President, Legislative Consultant, USDA Undersecretary, Legislative Committee Co-chairpersons. Attendees also were briefed by Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee in the House Hearing Room. The following day, members were given the opportunity to meet with their members of Congress on the Hill. This leadership/outreach training conference received great feedback from attendees who were encouraged and empowered to go back to their states and put their training in action. It also allowed NASCOE members to create lifelong friends while networking with FSA employees from across the nation; an opportunity that is rare for most FSA employees.



## NASCOE's Programs Committee gives you a VOICE!

**Did you know that FSA leadership has authorized NASCOE to work directly with WDC program specialists?**

NASCOE and FSA have partnered up to allow our members to submit suggestions on how FSA's programs could be made more effective and efficient for our employees and our producers. While our negotiations team handles policy concerns, NASCOE's Programs Committee accepts recommendations for improving our software, forms, handbooks, and more. The committee then reviews and forwards these submissions directly to the specialist in charge of the program for WDC review and response. We receive roughly 100 submissions every year from all over the country.

**Wondering what recent successes the Programs Committee has had?**

FSA program specialists want their programs to be successful and they value the first-hand feedback that our members provide. Therefore, they typically strive to enact our recommendations when policy and resources allow. Some examples include:

- Providing a "Top Ten" list of needed reports to DAFP. Most of these are now available to County Offices. This greatly helped targeting mailing lists.
- Numerous software improvements have been agreed to by WDC and are scheduled for implementation pending funding to update CCMS, CLPS, COLS, MIDAS and more. (Notice how CARS now pre-loads acres?)
- They listened when it was suggested that the CRP Prepayment Report list all the validation conditions for a non-payment versus only one condition at a time. They listened and it was corrected. THANK YOU WDC!
- Numerous Handbook updates, including clarification of AD-1026 language in 3-PL and adding COLS and CCMS user guides into a handbook.
- The Programs Committee also host a Q&A with WDC for our members during our breakout session at the annual NASCOE Convention.

### Have a great idea for a submission?

Forwarding up your idea is easy! Simply visit our website and look for the Programs tab. There you will find a simple online form for sending in your suggestion. Remember, the best submissions have a clear description of the problem and a recommendation for correction.

**Don't let your great ideas go unheard.  
Support NASCOE by improving our Programs!**



**VISIT US ONLINE AT NASCOE.ORG**

# Exclusive Benefits for NASCOE Members

Exclusive access to Working Advantage discount network.

This allows you to save up to 60% on items such as:

- Theme Parks (Six Flags, Disney, etc.)
- Movie Tickets (Cinemark, Regal, etc.)
- Hotels, Travel and Car Rentals
- Sporting Events, Health and Fitness
- Online Shopping

**Check it out at  
WorkingAdvantage.com!**

Contact your National, Area or State Benefits Chair for the NASCOE Company Code.

## **Other Benefits Include:**

- NASCOE Employee Relations Service (ERS) 1 hour free Legal Counsel
- Air Med Care Group Discount
- Various scholarships and awards are available, and more!
- Sam's Club \$10 Gift Card

**Visit the NASCOE website for specific details.**

*Being a member of NASCOE is far more important than any tangible benefit. It's about having the opportunity to make our jobs better and improving the programs and policies we deliver to our farmers and ranchers. NASCOE gives us a VOICE!*

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**As NASCOE's Benefits Provider, Dillard Financial Solutions, Inc. offers the following exclusive benefits to all NASCOE members:**

- Complimentary Federal Benefits Analysis
- Social Security Maximization
- Group Workshops
- One-on-One Appointments
- Spousal Survivor Benefit Options
- IRA and 401k Rollover Options
- TSP Rollover Options
- Insure Your Retirement Income
- FEGLI Life Insurance Alternatives
- ROTH IRAs for as little as \$50/PP
- Tax-Free Retirement Options
- LifeLock Identity Theft Protection



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# NASCOE Accomplishments

## In the 1990's

- FSA agreed to establish a Classification Task Force to continue to work on a new method of classification where grades are based on knowledge, skills, ability and complexity instead of workload. To bring CED grades more in line with other similar management positions in USDA, the grade CO-10 was eliminated and all CO-10 CED's were upgraded to CO-11.
- With the Agency downsizing and budget constraints, NASCOE expressed the need for an employee buyout and/or early retirement options. The buyout was offered in 1996 and 1997.
- CED Classification system implemented removing management grades from being determined totally by the workload report. Most CO-9 CED's upgraded.
- With the changing environment of the agency, NASCOE requested that FSA rescind the rule requiring that a CED remain in their first county for 18 months.
- Before 1998, GS and CO were treated differently when it came to awards and performance ratings. NASCOE fought to achieve parallel benefits between CO and GS with regards to awards and performance.
- NASCOE requested that Maxi-flex be implemented. FSA agreed to offer this alternative work schedule to CO employees.
- NASCOE requested and management agreed to allow two Key PT's in large shared management counties.

## In the 2000's

- Accomplished a significant increase in CED upgrades including all remaining CO-9 CED's.
- Accomplished reconsideration of all county office closures.
- Negotiated that CO and GS employees be on a level playing field when competing for federal jobs.
- Negotiated for loan approval authority for CO employees who complete training.
- Negotiated with FSA to ensure that suspensions pending investigation will occur only when credible evidence is produced.
- Successful in NAP being added under the Program Variety element and Soybean/Oilseeds added under the Crop Production element in the CED Classification and Pay Plan.
- Negotiated that FSA employees, COC Members and their families would be eligible to apply for direct and guaranteed loans through FSA.
- Negotiated a new Adverse Action procedure giving CO employees more protection.
- Negotiated changes in Travel Overtime and Travel Comp Time.
- Successfully requested the split of CRP General and Continuous Program for classification of PT grades.

## In more recent years

- Development of an Aspiring Leader Program for PT's. It identifies PT's with leadership potential and provide a training program to hone leadership skills.
- Pushing for equality and consistency in performance management determinations for all CO employees.
- Creation of Key PT Position.
- Rewriting of PT Descriptions, included NASCOE presence on work group and the writing of a Grade 8 PD (still in clearance process).
- Development of National PT Training, NASCOE presence on the development team.
- Agreement to provide National Office Retirement Trainings at NASCOE Functions.
- Inclusion on language in 27-PM to include documentation from local affiliation that consultation has occurred when shared management is being established.
- Ongoing discussion to enhance the COT hiring process.
- Creation of reports that were in System 36 but not included in new software.
- Continued discussions PT Grade increases.

## Each Year

- Yearly cost of living and locality pay – Each year **NASCOE must request that CO employees receive the COLA that other federal employees receive.**

NASCOE Represents

# "Loyalty, Service, Courtesy, & Effort"

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**Why:** NASCOE is our only voice to FSA Management and to congressional leaders on issues that affect our employment.

**When:** NOW

**Where & How:** By reaching out to your State Association

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BECOME A PART OF THE  
NASCOE TEAM TODAY!

