



NASCOE Now

June 10, 2011



**National Association of FSA County Office Employees**  
*Celebrating Over 50 Years of Serving American Agriculture*  
*1959-2011*

**Candidacy Announcement**  
**For the Office of**  
**NASCOE President**  
**by**  
**John R. Lohr**  
**May 6, 2011**

During these past two years as NASCOE's Vice President, I had an opportunity to be right alongside of President Myron Stroup as he guided our association through some very challenging times. With this experience added to my resume, I feel I am now uniquely qualified to be your association's president. Therefore, today I am announcing my candidacy for the office of NASCOE President.

Never in my wildest dreams when I began my CED career with ASCS more than thirty years ago would I have imagined a time when I would run for a NASCOE office. In the early days, my wife Carol and I were too busy with our children to ever consider being a NASCOE officer.

I vividly remember my early contacts with NASCOE officers and how impressed I was with their dedication to our association. Never did I envision that in the later stages of my career I would be trying to follow in the footsteps of NASCOE's many dedicated leaders.

My experiences as the Pennsylvania association president, my time with the NASCOE legislative and executive committees, and finally these last two years as your Vice President have helped prepare me to be your next President. In retrospect, I now realize that I have spent my career preparing for the day when I could offer to serve NASCOE in this capacity.

As I announce my candidacy, I have the support of my family, my staff, my County Committee, and my SED. Now I am asking for your support in Corpus Christi and if elected your President, I promise to work as hard as I can to lead this great association into the challenges and opportunities directly in front of us.

## NASCOE VICE-PRESIDENCY ANNOUNCEMENT

I am looking for support in my bid for Vice-President of NASCOE at the 2011 National Convention.

I am a CED in Fremont, Nebraska. I have worked for ASCS/FSA since October of 1977. I was a Program Assistant for 9 years before entering the COT program in 1987. Since then I have been a CED in four different offices in Nebraska, including four years as a shared management CED.

The Corpus Christi Convention will be my 19<sup>th</sup> National Convention, many times as a delegate from Nebraska. I have also attended most of the Legislative Conferences in the past 20 years.

I began serving on the NEBRASCOE Board in 1991 and was a member of the board for most of those 20 years. During my time on the board I served as Secretary for 5 years and President for 6 years.

I have spent the last three and a half years as the Northwest Area Alternate Exec and Northwest Area Exec. During that time I have worked hard to enhance the communication with my area by starting a periodic e-newsletter I call NWA Nuggets and I have set up an area database so all of my members have an opportunity to get information from me first hand rather than waiting until they get it from someone else.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time on the Executive Board and would like to continue to serve you in this great organization we call NASCOE.

I have the full support of my family, my staff, my County Committee, my DD and my SED.

I would be very honored to have your support as Vice-President of this great organization.

Cindy Hall

NWA Executive Committeeperson, NASCOE

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### CANDIDATE FOR NASCOE VICE PRESIDENT

**MARK VANHOOSE**

Dear NASCOE Members:

It is with great enthusiasm that I announce my candidacy for the office of NASCOE Vice President! It is an office I have been preparing for, and I am excited about the opportunity to serve membership in this position. I recognize the challenges are great as we face so many uncertainties but in times like these substantial positive change can occur when leadership is focused and membership is motivated. When you think about it, a NASCOE officer has a very short timeframe to impact the system. A very clear plan for success and the ability to communicate that plan to membership is vital! Based on my broad experience in NASCOE I recognize that defining key issues can be challenging across our network of county offices nationwide. I look forward to bringing diverse opinions together for a unified voice as your Vice President if given the opportunity.

The following are some of my positions and thoughts for the future:

- **The County Committee system makes FSA unique.** I feel strongly that the county committee system is what sets FSA apart and truly makes USDA the “people’s department” and must be maintained. The county committee holds FSA accountable to make sure we deliver programs in a manner that meets the needs of our producers and will work to support NAFEC as they fight to keep the county committee system strong.
- **An emphasis on negotiations with management.** As Title 5 exempt employees, management has great authority to affect the workplace for CO personnel. NASCOE is the only body that holds management accountable and we need to make sure we focus on improving working conditions for our members. Program Technician opportunities for improved economic status and promotion is an important endeavor for me and that is reflected in my work as chairperson of NASCOE’s first task force on PT classification. I promise your concerns will be heard and will work hard for the benefits and workplace improvements you deserve!
- **A legislative agenda based on grassroots education.** As a past national legislative chairperson I have great appreciation for the tools we have developed to further the cause of NASCOE. But I also recognize that the most important part of the legislative process is to develop personal relationships with congressmen and staff at the local level. I promise a legislative agenda that recognizes your need for tools to operate effectively at the grassroots level as we educate Congress on the importance of maintaining the county office system as the place where the rubber meets the road versus adding more layers above us that pull resources from county offices. We have a great record of delivering excellent service at limited cost and we need to include as many of our farm organization friends as we can to tell our story.
- **Communication is a two way street.** The executive board is charged with doing the will of the members it represents. That means talking to key leaders in each state to understand concerns as well as getting information out about the work and goals of NASCOE. While electronic media is important, nothing can replace the importance of NASCOE leaders visiting regularly by telephone and in person about the issues that are important to membership. Keeping you informed and getting your feedback will be a cornerstone of my efforts if elected.

My NASCOE and FSA experience has prepared me well for the office of Vice President. I have been with FSA as a CED for 25 years in Ohio. I have served as a shared management CED and know that experience as well. I served a number of different terms as President of the Ohio Association and I am currently serving in that role. I have been national chair or co-chair of the Legislative Committee for three years and I served as Midwest Area Executive. I have also served as a negotiation consultant and led the first NASCOE task force on PT classification.

I have the support of my family and staff as I pursue this challenge. It is not one I consider lightly as I fully recognize all that is required to serve in this position. I appreciate all those who have served before me and it would be a great honor to continue this tradition of service. I ask for your support as a candidate for NASCOE Vice President.

Sincerely,

Mark VanHoose

## NASCOE SECRETARY CANDADICY ANNOUNCEMENT

### Annette M. Hyman

I would like to announce that I am seeking re-election as NASCOE Secretary. It's hard to believe that just over a year ago I made the decision to run for this position. It's been a privilege to serve our membership. The NASCOE Board has faced several challenges dealing with management, the budget, and the soon to be 2012 Farm Bill. I have taken my responsibilities very seriously and considered the membership each and every time I have voted.

This year NASCOE had over 50 negotiation items to take to management. It was a learning experience to gather, separate, and compile 100 plus items that I received for our pre-negotiation session in January. Unfortunately, due to budget NASCOE's Labor Management Agreement was broken by WDC and we did not meet face to face to negotiate in April or June as agreed upon. Communication and perseverance have been the keys in continuing this year's negotiation process to address those 50 items.

This was my 15<sup>th</sup> year with the Farm Service Agency; 8 years as a Program Technician and 7 years as a CED and a NASCOE member since day one. I am fortunate to now be the CED in the county I started as a PT in in 1996. I have two excellent Program Technicians that allow me the time and dedicated mind to serve NASCOE. They fully support me in my NASCOE duties. My COC is also very supportive and always interested in what NASCOE is doing. My family supports me as well seeing the passion and desire I have for my job.

Maintaining employee jobs and benefits and securing FSA programs for our agricultural producers is the NASCOE Board's mission. I can guarantee you that I share in that mission and I am ready to fight the fight that we are facing and will continue to face, as we continue in these uncertain times. I appreciate your past support and welcome your continued support as I seek re-election as your NASCOE Secretary.



I am announcing that I am seeking re-election as your NASCOE Treasurer.

I have been a member of OASCOE/NASCOE my entire FSA career (over 26 years). I have served as your National Treasurer for 4 years. Prior to that I served as your National Program Committee Chair for 2 years, and prior to that I was the MWA Membership Chair for 3 years.

Over the past four years as your NASCOE Treasurer I have developed and then improved upon a detailed annual budget so that the NASCOE Board and membership could see exactly where their money was coming from and where it was going. I have tried to periodically update the NASCOE website with current financial information.

The NASCOE Executive Board is a wonderful team of hard working individuals of which I have been honored to serve with for the past 4 years. Communication has been the key to its successes, and will be necessary to face our challenges in the future. We, as Board members, try to listen to the voice of membership, then compile your thoughts and concerns and represent you accordingly. I feel the Board's professionalism and strong sense of teamwork have strengthened our relationship with our membership and with our FSA management in WDC. I would like to continue this work as a member of the NASCOE Board.

I remain committed to NASCOE, its membership, and its goals. I would appreciate your consideration of me as a candidate to serve you another year as NASCOE Treasurer.

Shelly Odenkirk





Dear NASCOE Friends,

I would like to take this opportunity to announce that I am running for re-election as your Midwest Area Executive.

NASCOE and FSA employees are a partnership. Communication between this partnership is a necessity in order for both partners to be successful. NASCOE is fighting for the protection of FSA employees, but along the way NASCOE may need for FSA employees to play a part and also be pro-active. I strive to do my best to keep good communications between the Exec Board and the members in the Midwest Area.

Taking into consideration today's national economic and budget crisis, along with the uncertainty of the 2012 farm bill, NASCOE has a big task ahead of them. I can assure you that your NASCOE board has been working for diligently for YOU, keeping abreast of the situation at hand, communicating with the National FSA Leadership, with Congressional Members, with other Employee Organizations, and with YOU, the members of NASCOE.

Having been a Program Technician in the Iroquois County, Illinois FSA office for 24 years, I currently serve in my district as the Conservation Advisory Contact and as a SURE Advisory Contact. I have been the secretary-treasurer for IASCOE since 2005-2006. For three years I served you as the MWA Alternate Executive, for four years as the MWA Negotiation Consultant and for the past year it has been my honor to serve as your MWA Executive.

I would appreciate your support as I seek re-election for the office of Midwest Area Executive.

Respectfully,

*Charlene Neukomm*

Candidacy Announcement  
Midwest Area Alternate Executive



Well, this seems to come around almost as quickly as COC elections. It seems like only yesterday that I was announcing my intention to run for Midwest Area Alternate Executive, and here it is time to announce again. I have very much appreciated the opportunity to serve as the Alternate Executive this year and would like to announce that I will be running for a second term when we get to Corpus Christi this summer.

I mentioned last year that I was running for this position because I have deep appreciation and a great deal of gratitude for the hard work that others have done on my behalf and that I felt it was time for me to do my part. Each of us have personally benefited from the dedication and tireless efforts of those who have come before us. I am at a position in my career and personal life that I can devote the time that is necessary to do this job effectively. There are a couple of things I have come to realize over the years that will benefit me in this position. The first is, it is amazing how much can get done when no one cares who gets the credit. And second, it pays to take turns doing the hard jobs. With that thought in mind, I simply believe that it is my turn to share a bigger part of the load.

I knew coming in that this job would be challenging, time consuming, and demanding. The truth is it has been all of that and more. It has also been very rewarding. I have had the chance to meet and work with dedicated NASCOE members from all over the country as part of the negotiation team. It has also been my privilege to represent the Midwest Area at a couple of state conventions and to be part of the Missouri delegation at the recent legislative conference.

I am very fortunate to have the support of my staff, my District Director and my family since deciding to become more involved with NASCOE at the area level. I look forward to seeing old friends and meeting new ones at the National Convention in Corpus Christi. Until then you can contact me by personal email at [djray2239@sbcglobal.net](mailto:djray2239@sbcglobal.net) or at my work email of [dennis.ray@mo.usda.gov](mailto:dennis.ray@mo.usda.gov). In an effort to utilize all methods of communication, NASCOE has expanded its use of social media, so you can also find me on Facebook.

It seems fitting that the time frame for candidacy announcements coincides with our Mid-Year performance reviews. I hope that my effort this year has exceeded fully successful, and I ask for your support for a second term.

Thanks for any consideration you may show me during this process.

Dennis Ray  
Midwest Area Alternate Executive

## North West Area Executive



**My name is Larry Olsen from South Dakota and I am announcing my candidacy for Northwest Area Executive Director for the upcoming election to be held at the 2011 NASCOE National Convention in Corpus Christi, Texas.**

**I have worked for ASCS/CFSA/FSA since 1983 and I have been a SDASCOE/NASCOE member from my first day as a Permanent County Office Employee.**

**I am presently the CED in the Minnehaha County FSA Office in Sioux Falls, SD. I have served as the SDASCOE Legislative Chairperson for the past 12 years and the NWA Alternate Exec for the past 2 years.**

**I am asking everyone in the NWA for your support and hope that you will grant me the privilege to serve the Northwest Area and NASOCE in this position. I expect the next 2 years to be very challenging for County Office Employees in FSA and I will do my very best to represent you!**

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## NASCOE NWA Alternate Executive Committee Person

### Candidate Announcement

Phillip Morton

At this time I would like to announce my candidacy for the position of NWA Alternate Executive.

I believe that part of our duty in life is to do what we can to help others. While I am currently active in many charitable groups, volunteering my time to work for NASCOE and its' members has become my passion.

I have been a PT in the Lane County, Oregon FSA office since 2003. I became a member of Oregon's' NASCOE affiliate known as OASCOE as soon as I was given the opportunity. I soon became the OASCOE Membership Chair in 2004, and still maintain that position today along with the position of one of our State Directors. Currently I serve NASCOE as the NASCOE Benefits Chairperson.

I have had the opportunity to attend several conventions and an organizational meeting, as well as a legislative conference. It has been during these events that the desire to do more for my fellow employees has been fostered, and I feel that my passion for the FSA and its employees will keep me motivated to represent you.

It is with humble heart that I ask for your support.

Respectfully,

Phillip R Morton





## **Candidacy Announcement**

**Wes Daniels**

**Southeast Area Executive Committee Person**

I am announcing my candidacy for the Southeast Area Executive position. I have spent this past year serving as alternate SEA Executive to Perry Dykes. Assisting Perry has been a great learning experience. I've had the opportunity to represent NASCOE and the SEA at several State conventions during this past year. This has given me the chance to meet with many of you and discuss the upcoming challenges we are facing in the near future. Getting to meet with many of you and being able to discuss the challenges facing us in the near future has reinforced the importance that NASCOE plays in our careers and lives. I am excited about the possibility of serving the SEA and NASCOE.

I started my career with ASCS in April of 1989 as a PT in Dillon, South Carolina. I immediately joined SCASCOE/NASCOE. In August of 1990 I entered the COT program and was hired as CED in February of 1991. I am currently serving as the CED of Dillon County, SC. I have served in NASCOE as SEA Scholarship Chairperson in 1994 and 1995, the SEA Awards Chairperson 1997, and served in many positions with our state association including my current positions as Vice- President, Legislative Chairperson, and Convention Co-Chairperson.

With the past year behind me I realize the responsibilities that lay ahead with this position and consider it a great privilege for the opportunity to serve as the SEA representative to NASCOE. My family, staff, and SED will continue to support me in this endeavor and I ask for your support as a candidate for Southeast Area Executive.



## **Candidacy Announcement**

### **Southwest Area Executive**

**By**

**Dale R. Fowers**

**May 15, 2011**

I am announcing my candidacy for the Southwest Area Executive position. During the past 2 years I have served as the alternate SWA Executive to Kevin Dale. It has been a great experience observing and learning the responsibilities of the Executive committee from Kevin, other members of the committee and National officers. I have appreciated their dedication and loyalty to each one of us, through their service to our employee association.

In July of 1978, I started my career, as a CED trainee. I learned early in my career the important role NASCOE plays in helping to improve our employment and maintain our benefits as county office employees. Naturally, over the years, these benefits have been important to me and my family.

I recognize the important role FSA has in supporting and helping to sustain American Agriculture. I appreciate NASCOE's role in uniting us as employees and as an agency. I have enjoyed serving Utah's association as President and currently as the legislative board member, along with being the SWA alternate exec. I have enjoyed working with and respect all those willing to give of their time and resource to help make our jobs better.

Along with the support of my wife, Merlynn, I ask for your support at the National Convention in Corpus Christi.



BRANDON WILSON

CANDIDATE FOR SW AREA ALTERNATE EXECUTIVE

Dear South West Area NASCOE Members,

I am announcing my candidacy for the office of NASCOE South West Area Alternate Executive.

Some of my goals include:

- Continued emphasis on NASCOE promoting the importance of what County Offices do for their farmers, communities and country.
- A strong embedded legislative program that shares the FSA message both in Washington and back home in the states.
- Keeping a strong membership by making sure that the members know what NASCOE does on their behalf and that they know NASCOE is the only voice that the administration recognizes to represent county employees.
- Support of the premier FSA local delivery system of administering farm and conservation programs.
- Continued support of special NASCOE initiatives such as PT upgrades.
- Support of a negotiations process that utilizes NASCOE to provide feedback to the administration and accountable follow-up with employee suggestions.

I have been with USDA 10 years- two with NRCS and eight with FSA. At present I am a CED in Osage County, Kansas. My service to NASCOE includes: KASCOE District Director, KASCOE Publicity Chairperson, KASCOE Legislative Chairperson, KASCOE President and South West Area Membership Chairperson. Please e-mail me at [wilsonbj86@gmail.com](mailto:wilsonbj86@gmail.com) with any questions you might have about my candidacy.

I am excited about the opportunity to serve NASCOE and would appreciate the support of the Southwest Area!

Sincerely,

Brandon Wilson

## YOUR TIME FOR ACTION IS COMING

by Tony Augustine, MWA Legislative Chairperson

In Washington, DC, Vice President Biden is negotiating with key Republicans and Democrats from both the House and Senate to reach an agreement on spending reductions so that a deal can be made to raise the national debt ceiling. As of right now the two ideas all sides agree on is to cut farm subsidies and to make federal employees contribute more toward their retirement. Clearly, both of these ideas will affect all of us in FSA and as employees, we will need to speak up and show that we disagree.

Some of the employee benefit cuts being considered by Congress that NASCOE is monitoring are:

1. Make FERS employees pay half of the contribution toward their FERS retirement. Currently, employees covered under the FERS retirement system contribute 0.8% of their salary toward paying for their retirement annuity. This represents 1/14<sup>th</sup> of the total put in to fund your annuity when you retire. The government contributes the remaining portion. (By the way, this is different than the Thrift Savings Plan contributions you and the government make to the TSP.) The proposal would make the amount you pay into FERS 7 times higher than what is deducted from your paycheck right now. For example, an employee making \$45,000 currently pays 0.8% into FERS (\$13.84/ PP). If this proposal is enacted, you would pay 7 times that amount each pay period (\$96.88/ PP) with no increase in your retirement annuity. Currently, FERS employees pay 6.2% to Social Security and 0.8% to FERS from each paycheck which is equal to the 7% deducted from paychecks of employees covered under the CSRS retirement system. If FERS contributions are increased to 5.6%, with the 6.2% contribution to Social Security, employees under FERS will pay a total of 11.8% toward their retirement. This creates an unfair imbalance in contributions between the FERS and CSRS retirement systems.
2. Freeze COLAs for a total of 5 years. As federal employees, we have already made significant contributions to deficit reduction through the two year freeze on our COLAs. Any longer freeze unfairly uses federal employees as scapegoats when we weren't the cause of the deficit.
3. Change your retirement computation from a high 3 average salary to a high 5 average salary. This proposal would reduce the size of your annuity you receive in retirement. An employee under FERS with a high 3 average salary of \$45,000 at retirement with 30 years of service would receive \$13,500 per year for their FERS annuity. Assuming a 2.5% COLA was received each year over the previous 5 years, that same employee would get \$324 less each and every year of their retirement by using a 5 year average. Over the entire length of your retirement, this amounts to thousands of dollars less for you to live on. Employees under the CSRS retirement system would also be affected by this change by an even greater degree.

As these changes work their way through Congress, **we all** as members of NASCOE will need to speak up in unison to every member of Congress to oppose these unfair proposals. Only if **each of us** takes action

to flood every Congressional office with letters will we make our message clear that these ideas are wrong. When the time for action comes, each of you needs to be ready to respond and release your frustration by sending the CAPWIZ alerts as soon as they are posted. There is strength in numbers, so when all of our CAPWIZ letters are received in the Congressional offices in massive numbers, they sit up and take notice. Remember, every letter represents a voter's opinion and an unhappy voter won't re-elect the Congressional member. Make your opinion known and speak up for the benefits you work hard to earn. The NASCOE leadership is tracking these and other proposals and during the next few months, when the time is right to act, a CAPWIZ alert will be posted for you to take action on. That is when it is up to you to make sure that your views are heard, so be ready to respond because YOUR TIME FOR ACTION IS COMING!

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Making Travel Plans this Summer... Check Out NASCOE Travel

Hello everyone!

We are 62 days away from the NASCOE Convention! I booked my flights tonight using the link on the NASCOE web site as YTB travel gave me the best price and the best travel times. I checked Southwest, Frontier and Airtran Airlines but none of them fly to Corpus Christi. I tried Cheeptickets.com, Orbitz.com and Priceline.com and they were all \$10 more and they did not offer the same flights (leave at a great time and get home at a great time). If you are flying to the convention, please check out the NASCOE website ([www.nascoe.org](http://www.nascoe.org)) and click on the link on the home page for NASCOE Travel. Check your local air carriers to see if you can get a better price, but from what I found tonight, we have the best deal, and we get the commissions!

Thank you everyone and I will be in contact with you soon!

Tom

Hey everyone,

Just as a reminder to everyone that not just for the National Convention, but as you make summer travel plans, please take the time to check out the NASCOE travel store. It works a lot like Travelosity, Orbitz and those other travel stores, except NASCOE get a percentage of what is booked through the NASCOE travel store.

Anyone can use it, friends family neighbors, anyone with computer access, and NASCOE gets a cut.

I have used it in the past, and it is very competitive with other travel stores. I have even heard of people using it to book rooms for conventions that were less than the group rate that NASCOE was offering.

Just go to [www.nascoe.org](http://www.nascoe.org) and look for the link to the NASCOE travel store.

Let me know if you have questions, and please pass the word on.

Jackson

Missouri State President

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## Awards, Scholarships & Emblems

[www.nascoeemblemsonline.com](http://www.nascoeemblemsonline.com)

*As promised in the last NASCOE Now I would like to present you with our 2011 NASCOE Memorial Scholarship Winner!*

*Please let me introduce you to Renita Goetz from South Dakota who is our 2011 NASCOE Memorial Scholarship winner!*

*Renita is the daughter of Eleanor and Todd Goetz. Eleanor is the Lead Program Technician in Walworth County, SD and Todd is a self employed Rancher/Farmer on their family farm.*

*Renita was the 2010 Class Valedictorian with a perfect 4.0 grade point average. She has just completed her 1<sup>st</sup> year at the University of South Dakota and after just her 1<sup>st</sup> semester (with another perfect 4.0!) she was admitted to the Honors Program. She is working on a Biology Major, Pre-Med with the intentions of becoming a Pediatrician.*

*When I called Renita to tell her the good news she was so excited and appreciative of this award, and asked me to thank each and every NASCOE Member for their generosity to help her achieve her goal to help children as a Pediatrician. If a few years from now you find yourself vacationing in South Dakota and one of your Children or Grandchildren fall ill make sure and look Renita up! After our convention I will post her picture and her Bio to the NASCOE web site so all of you can see all that she has already accomplished and her plans for the future!*

*Emblems Notes:*

*In March I posted "a chance to win a \$25.00 NASCOE Store Gift Certificate challenge" and then gave a last chance in the last NASCOE Now for ideas to sell our L O N G web address ([www.nascoeemblemsonline.com](http://www.nascoeemblemsonline.com)) with a June 1<sup>st</sup> deadline to win \$25.00 gift certificate from the NASCOE Store out of my pocket for the best entry!*

*I am proud to announce that Lori Jones from White River, SD has won the \$25.00 gift certificate by submitting the winning entry:*

www.	\$67
nascoeemblemsonline	\$1350
.com	\$589

The **quality**, **selection** & **service** you get from it -----

**PRICELESS!!!!!!!!!! 😊**

*Congratulations Lori, and thank you to all that submitted your "sales pitches"!*

*Please remember that the NASCOE Memorial Scholarship fund receives 100% of the commission from the sales at the NASCOE Store! Without your generous purchases, and the donations we receive from JM Marketing, we would not be able to award the \$10,000 we award each year to our Area scholarship winners and to the National Scholarship winner! On behalf of all of our NASCOE Scholarship winners past and present - Thank you! Treat yourself and shop the NASCOE Store today – remember you are worth it! [www.nascoeemblemsonline.com](http://www.nascoeemblemsonline.com)*

*Awards notes:*

*I have Certificate of Appreciation and Extra Mile Certificates signed by our NASCOE President and Secretary so I can get these to you as soon as you need them. If you have an upcoming event, and need them as soon as possible please let me know ([oasen@charter.net](mailto:oasen@charter.net)).*

*Sick Leave Certificates: I have the official copies with me and all I need is for you to complete the spreadsheet on the NASCOE web site ([www.nascoe.org](http://www.nascoe.org)) and let me know where you want me to mail them to. Your State President and Secretary/Treasurer will need to sign these. Email me if you have any questions.*

*Tom Oasen, NASCOE ASE Chairperson*

## Benefits Watch

The following information may be useful to those who are considering the current VERA offering:

### Effect of Early Retirement on Annuity

**Employees considering an early retirement must consult with their human resources office and follow agency procedures to receive an annuity estimate and obtain advice specific to their personal situation.**

#### CSRS Annuity

- Commencing date of annuity - If the employee retires on the 1st, 2nd, or 3rd day of a month, annuity begins the following day. Otherwise, annuity begins the first day of the month following retirement.
- Calculation of annuity - Annuity is calculated based on the average high-3 salary and years and months of creditable service. Unused sick leave can be used for additional service credit. If the employee is under age 55, this calculation is reduced by one-sixth of one percent for each full month he/she is under age 55 (i.e. 2% per year).

#### FERS Annuity

- Commencing date of annuity - Annuity begins the first day of the month following retirement.
- Calculation of annuity - FERS Basic Annuity is calculated based on the average high-3 salary and years and months of creditable service. Under FERS, 50% of the total unused sick leave not used in the computation of a CSRS component of an individual retiring under FERS shall be creditable for purposes of annuity computation. The remaining 50% of the total unused sick leave shall be treated as sick leave which can be recredited upon reemployment, and shall remain available for purposes of recredit on reemployment indefinitely.

There is no annuity reduction in FERS for employees who retire on an early voluntary retirement under age 55. A FERS Transferee with a CSRS Component in his/her annuity, who retires before age 55, will have the CSRS portion of the payable annuity reduced by one-sixth of one percent for each full month he/she is under age 55. No reduction will be applied to the FERS component of the annuity.

A FERS Annuity Supplement is payable to an employee who has completed at least one calendar year of FERS service when he/she reaches Minimum Retirement Age (MRA). MRA is age 55 to 57, depending on date of birth. The annuity supplement is payable until eligibility for Social Security begins at age 62, subject to an earnings limitation.

## Effect of Early Retirement on Benefits

**Health Benefits:** Employees retiring in conjunction with a VERA or Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment (VSIP) authority must have been covered under the FEHB Program (1) for the last 5 years of their Federal civilian service in order to continue such coverage in retirement, or (2) if less than 5 years, for all service since the employee was eligible for these benefits unless these requirements are waived.

OPM will grant pre-approved waivers to employees who have been:

1. Covered under the FEHB Program continuously since the beginning date of the agency's latest statutory VSIP authority, or OPM-approved VSIP or VERA authority; **and**
  - o Retire during the statutory VSIP or OPM-approved VSIP/VERA period; **and**
  - o Receive a VSIP; **or**
2. Take early optional retirement (i.e., VERA); **or**
3. Take discontinued service retirement based on an involuntary separation due to RIF, directed reassignment, reclassification to a lower grade, or abolishment of position.

Coverage as an annuitant is identical to coverage as an employee, but premiums are not paid on a pre-tax basis.

Please contact your State or Area Benefits Chair if you have any questions that we can help you find an answer to.

Respectfulluy,

Phillip Morton

NASCOE Benefits Committee Chairperson



# 2011 NASCOE CONVENTION

**CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS**

***AUGUST 11-13, 2011***

August is fast approaching and you don't want to miss out on the convention that Texas has been preparing for. There are deadlines for room reservations and convention registration so mark your calendars for these important dates!

**Cut-off date for room reservations is July 15<sup>th</sup>.**

For information regarding reservation availability you may  
call

**1-800-843-6664 (1-800-The-Omni).**

**Make sure you let them know you are with NASCOE**

***Sign up for the Loyalty Program for special benefits and offers!***

**Time is running out on Registration!**

**Don't DELAY send it in TODAY!**

**Registration before June 15<sup>th</sup> is \$30.**

**After July 1<sup>st</sup> is \$35.**

**After July 15<sup>th</sup> is \$40.**

**Cut-off date for room reservations is July 15<sup>th</sup>**