**Legislative Committee Report**

**Dallas, TX**

**January 18th & 19th, 2014**

With the holiday season behind us and a new year just beginning, the Legislative Committee is back to work. The report below provides a snapshot of the items our legislative committee activity.

**The First Six Months:**

We are entering our 7th month of working with Hunter Moorhead and Crossroads Strategies. Making the switch from the Redding Firm to Crossroads Strategies has meant we lost some of the old contacts and also gained new ones. Most notably—increased relationships within USDA and increased conversation between Hunter and management has been a definite positive. Hunter has been responsive to email, phone calls, and texts. From the massive amount of information he receives regularly, Hunter is constantly filtering through to provide us with the information that is most important and relevant to NASCOE. Additionally, Hunter is filtering the many PAC contribution requests he receives and will be forwarding us requests that he feels are important to NASCOE’s legislative success. As we move into 2014 and mid-term elections, we anticipate that PAC request activity will increase.

**2013-2014 Legislative Focus:**

As everyone will recall, we have made a major shift in a legislative focus to strengthening our grassroots connections across the country instead of annual legislative fly-ins and mass electronic mail services contacting Congress. We are aware that it will take time to develop the relationships at home. However—we are steadily seeing signs of more local involvement. Just a few quick examples: Member(s) attending a town hall meeting in the Arkansas district of Rick Crawford and presenting a NASCOE PAC contribution, the Oklahoma Association leadership requesting a conference call with Hunter to ensure local efforts are focused correctly, Hunter initiating a conference call w/ the Michigan Association to request calls be made to Senator Stabenow concerning office closures language in the farm bill, and most recent—a phone call from the Mississippi Legislative Committee Chair asking for an update so current legislative information gets included in an upcoming newsletter. These are all examples of membership becoming more engaged in the legislative process. As we move into 2014 and state conventions and area rallies are held, we will continue to stress the importance of developing personal relationships with Congress.

Also important is our ability in the upcoming year to get timely information out to membership. Through regular conference call notes being distributed to membership as well as very regular updates during the 16 day furlough—we feel like we have been very successful in keeping membership informed on all things legislative.

**PAC:** Current enrollment for PAC as of the December 2013 bank statement is 574 contributors. We have added 22 new contributors since August of 2013. Looking at deposits per pay period—PP 25 of 2012 deposited $2466.00; PP25 of 2013 deposited $2335.00. While we have seen a 2% decrease in contributors and a 5% decrease in deposits since last year, it is important to recognize that PAC contributions have pretty much remained unchanged even with VERA, VSIP, and natural attrition reducing our membership role at a significantly high rate over the past year to 24 months. Within the last 30-45 days we have made progress on minimizing or hopefully eliminating service fees on the PAC account. Because of Hunter’s work—NFC has indicated that they can combine the almost 600 deposits each pay period into a single deposit to BB & T. NFC indicated that they needed additional information from the Department and Hunter has made that phone call to obtain the necessary information. While the December statement continued to show the $300 + service fee—hopefully we will see January deposits consolidated into a single deposit. Stay tuned……..

**NAFEC:** We continue to work with Kevin Dale and the rest of the NAFEC Committee to promote increased NAFEC participation. The Legislative Committee is confident that our collective efforts to grow NAFEC are resulting in an even stronger advocate for FSA. As part of our grassroots focus this year-we stressed to membership during convention that COC/NAFEC members at home needed to be involved in building relationships. An example: When the Michigan Association was asked to make phone calls to Senator Stabenow concerning the office closures language in the farm bill, our members also identified COC members to make phone calls into the Senator’s office. This is exactly the type of combined NASCOE—NAFEC effort we are looking to build and look for these efforts to continue.

As we are finalizing this report, the farm bill is much closer to becoming law than we have seen in the last two years. Without and law in place, we are optimistic that a new farm bill will be enacted very soon to prevent any effects of “permanent law” from being felt. We hope that the recent conflict over new dairy policy will be resolved in short order and a conference report will be delivered for a vote in both chambers of Congress. We were pleased to see a budget agreement signed into law to avoid another furlough situation, the effects of sequestration, and the need for CR’s for the next two years. Again, we are optimistic that all 11 appropriations bills will be completed very soon and the gov’t funded for the remainder of FY 2014.

Respectfully submitted

--The Legislative Committee