

## **LEGISLATIVE/LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE SEPTEMBER 19-22, 2016**

Jennifer Chavez, Michaela Iverson, Doug Hofer, and Joel Foster attended the Legislative/Leadership Conference in WDC September 19-22. NASCOE provided monetary assistance as an incentive to encourage people who have never attended a Legislative Conference. Since we were all first time attendees to a Legislative Conference, SDASCOE will be getting reimbursed \$1,000 from NASCOE.

The Conference was held at the Westin Hotel and Resorts in Alexandria, VA. Since there are not any pressing legislative issues at the present time, the main focus of the conference was to develop the next generation of NASCOE leaders.

Monday, September 19 was considered a travel day. We flew out of Sioux Falls with a connecting flight in Chicago. There was only a 40 minute layover in Chicago so that was a concern, but thanks to Jennifer's navigating she got us to our departing gate with time to spare. We arrived at 11:30 AM at Ronald Reagan Airport. We took a taxi from the airport to the motel. Once we checked into the motel we went to Joe Theismann Sports Bar for lunch, and much to our dismay Joe was not there. We took a tour of Old Towne, and attended the evening social to meet others attending the conference.

Tuesday, September 20 was spent at the Westin for the Leadership portion of the conference. The day had some very good information, but it was not quite what we expected. We were expecting outside speakers during the leadership portion, but instead it was NASCOE leadership talking to us about FSA structure, the importance of the COC system, advocacy, and informing us of their experiences with FSA leadership. Although it was not quite what we expected, it was a very beneficial discussion. The organizational chart was good to see as most are not aware of the organization within FSA.

Hunter Moorhead of Crossroads Strategies spoke to us on Tuesday regarding the Congressional visits on Wednesday. Hunter stated that most of the congressional aids that we would be visiting with would have little knowledge about FSA and NASCOE so we would need to educate them on our goals and mission. He did make one exception saying the group meeting with Lynn Tjeerdsma would not need to educate him on NASCOE and FSA since he has worked for FSA.

Our Association's Political Action Committee (PAC) assist our legislative efforts. Most private companies and associations operate PACs in order to support like-minded political candidates. PAC contributions are approved for candidates who support production agriculture and NASCOE legislative priorities. Hunter Moorhead of Crossroads Strategies along with our NASCOE leadership direct our PAC funds. The website for Crossroads Strategies is <http://crshq.com/about-us>. To find out more about PAC and to fill out the form to begin contributing go to <https://nascoe.org/the-nascoe-pac>. We encourage every member of SDASCOE to contribute to the NASCOE PAC to at least \$3.00 per pay period.



Dillard Financial also spoke to us on Tuesday. It was repetitive for those of who have been to a state convention, rally or national convention. Dillard Financial is NASCOE's official benefits provider.

On Tuesday night we took a bus tour of The Mall at night. Although all of us had been to WDC before, there were new monuments that none of us had seen before. Joel had to make sure to go check out the FDR memorial as all the granite for the memorial is quarried just east of Milbank. It was impressive seeing the monuments lit up in the dark.

On Wednesday morning, we met with Hunter Moorhead to obtain the final times for our congressional visits. Mr. Moorhead and Crossroads Strategies set up all the appointments with the congressional members. Those of us that did not have immediate congressional appointments met as a group in the morning with a couple dignitaries.

The first group visit of the day was to the Whitten Building, which is where Secretary Vilsack's office is located. We were addressed by Deputy Undersecretary Lanon Baccam. The second group visit was to the Longworth House Office Building where we met with Representative Mike Conway (R-Texas), Chairman of the House Ag Committee, in the House Ag Committee meeting room.

We ate lunch at the Dirksen Senate Office Building prior to meeting with Lynn Tjeerdsma of Senator Thune's at 1:30 PM. We discussed the CRP issues, differences in ARC/PLC yields from county to county along with other topics. Lynn stated that he just got back from a meeting where they were questioning Secretary Vilsack on the need for managed haying and grazing on CRP as it relates to SAFE and CP37 acres. We were hoping Sen. Thune would make an appearance, but we later found out he had a very good excuse as he was welcoming his first granddaughter into the world on Wednesday. Hunter Moorhead was unable schedule us time with Sen. Rounds and Representative Noem,



Once we were done meeting with Mr. Tjeerdsma, we headed back to the motel to get out of our dress clothes. At the end of the day, everyone met back at the motel to give a briefing on our congressional visits. Since we only had one visit, this allowed us time to check out some additional sites.

Our flight departed at 8:00 AM on Thursday morning. The Metro was within walking distance of the motel so we ended up taking the Metro to the airport versus a taxi. There were several people from NASCOE flying out at the same time. We shared the same flight to Chicago with NASCOE Secretary, Deb Esselman, and her husband who are from Wisconsin. Once again we had a short 40 minute layover in Chicago, but our flight was slightly delayed as we were waiting for our plane to arrive. However; we still ended up landing in Sioux Falls close to our scheduled time of about 11:30 AM.

It was a quick short trip that still allowed a little time to be a tourist. Since we had all been to WDC previously, we opted not to spend extra days being a tourist. Several people came in on Sunday or waited until Friday to depart.

It was a great experience especially since none of us had ever attended a Legislative Conference. We would encourage everyone to consider attending future Leadership/Legislative Conferences.

Respectfully submitted,

Joel Foster  
Doug Hofer  
Michaela Iverson  
Jennifer Chavez