

NORTHWEST AREA RALLY DELEGATE REPORT

APRIL 27-29, 2017

LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

Thursday, April 27, marked the beginning of the Northwest Area Rally. It started off with a guided tour of Memorial Stadium, home of the Blackshirts and Nebraska Football. The South Dakota delegation attending the NWA Rally were, Joel Foster, Lori Jones, Kay Massingale and myself (Janelle Adrian).

Friday morning, attendees heard opening remarks from Lancaster County Commissioner, Todd Wiltgren, welcoming all of us to Nebraska and to Lincoln. Also, welcoming us was Mike Sander, Nebraska Acting SED.

We were then entertained by Glenn Brunkow, Agriculture Advocate & Cowboy Poet. Glenn is a fifth-generation farmer in the Northern Flint Hills of Pottawatomie County in Kansas. He was a county Extension agent for 19 years before returning to farm and ranching full time. His has a weekly column called "Dust on the Dashboard." His passion is agriculture, sharing stories of life being a farmer/rancher in Kansas.

We then heard from Chris Beyerhelm, Acting FSA Administrator, conveying his message, "to be an Advocate for Agriculture". USDA will be experiencing a proposed 21 percent budget cut in FY18. He advised we stay positive and continue doing our jobs with the excellent service we have always given our farmers and ranchers. Talked about leasing, FSA has at least 80% of the leases and they are working to make it more equal with NRCS sharing in the leasing responsibilities. There will be the removal of printers from the offices as there is quite a cost of keeping printers. Mr. Beyerhelm, did praise Darren Ash, IT, for the good job he is doing, there have been less problems with systems going down across the country. He briefly talked about ARS, workload reporting, making sure we are reporting the actual hours we work. He would like Congress to have a clear picture of the work FSA is doing.

Steve Peterson, Division Director for Production, Emergencies, and compliance Division, spoke next. He is happy that FSA is getting more innovative, for example, new options available in the FSFL program. He talked about how FSA is being recognized as the organization that gets the work done and how important it is to be open to taking on new programs.

We then moved to Questions & Answers portion of the meeting. The panel consisted of Mr. Beyerhelm, Mr. Peterson, Wes Daniels (NASCOE President), and Janae Prescott. A good session was held. Talked about the following:

- Length of Service Awards – Will use up inventory, in the future will probably use lapel pins, this needs to be under \$10.
- ARS/Workload – 2014 was the last time it was used for staffing. Not sure when they will update how workload is measured.
- Temporary Employee funding – No funding will be available for temporary employees.
- WEBTA – working on a number of issues with WEBTA trying to get it more user friendly.
- MIDAS – this system is here to stay.
- Receipt for Service – This is required in the statutes, FSA will keep doing this as it tells the story of what we as an Agency is doing.
- CLPS – software is going to be enhanced.

Representatives from NAFEC, RASCOE, NACS, NASE, and NADD addressed the group.

NWA legislative Chair, Linda Robb, addressed the group. She stressed how important it is to contribute to the PAC.

Cathy Dennison spoke on behalf of JM Marketing. Dillard Financial presented a slide show on retirement planning. We then adjourned until the banquet.

Presentations were given for NWA DSA awards. Silent auction items were bid on and distributed to the highest bidder.

We reconvened on Saturday morning at 8:00 A.M. with joint committee meetings and reports. The highlights are as follows:

- NAFEC Report – Greg Chewakin, wanted County Committee's to review the Coalition letter to Congress regarding the Agriculture budget cuts. The letter is dated 2/21/17.
- Legislative – Linda Robb, stressed again to contribute to the PAC. Secretary Perdue is going to be confirmed. The feeling is this will be good for Agriculture. Encourages local stakeholders, such as, wheatgrowers, soybean associations, etc to get involved.
- Membership – Lori Jones, the NWA is at 75% now. That is good but we are encouraging all states to increase membership.
- Benefits – Deana Tranby, discussed that Dillard Financial is in their third year of their contract. Very pleased with the job they are doing. Discussed the many discounts available being a NASCOE member.
- Awards/Emblems/Scholarships – Kyra Hagberg, discussed that the application process has been changed. Everything is now done online.

NWA Executive, Janae Prescott, discussed Bridges to Opportunity. She was on the team working with BTO and was very positive about the program. Once it is fully up and running, she believes it will be an excellent tool. She also discussed staffing. All states are doing more work with less employees. Everyone is feeling the same pressures. If we have real issues please know you can go to NASCOE.

Old Business discussed how important the database is. We need to keep this updated as it is an important way to notify employees and membership. New Business, NWA rally announcements were made. NWA rally will be in Bellingham, Washington. Would like to hold it during the Tulip Festival time, around the third week of April.

At this time, candidacy announcements were made. Dennis Ray announced his intentions to run for NASCOE President.

This concludes the NWA rally for 2017. There is, as always, so much more information that is given at these meetings, than, what is presented. I would encourage any and all members to attend any rally's they are able to get to. It is a great experience and a person learns what goes on "behind the scenes" of FSA and how hard this association works for its members. I thank SDASCOE for allowing Kay and myself to be delegates.

Respectfully submitted,

Janelle Adrian and Kay Massingale

NWA Delegates, 2017