



August 8, 2014

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FSA SUPPORT EMPLOYEES

USDAConnect – <https://connections.usda.gov/>

MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

NASE strives to:

- *promote the betterment of the Farm Service Agency through improved service to the public*
- *Improve our programs*
- *Establish a cooperative relationship at all levels of the Agency*
- *Help accomplish the mission of USDA and FSA*
- *Improve support staff effectiveness*
- *Improve morale, esprit-de-corp, and efficiency*
- *Promote self-motivation, self-education, and career enhancement*
- *Promote the social, economic, civic and personal welfare of support employees*



Wear **red** on Fridays to show support for our troops at home and abroad.

My apologies to Barb Painter, the Zone C representative who I said was from Indiana. She is actually from Illinois. (And I knew that, just a slip of the typing fingers.) It would not be the first time I erred and I am not too proud to admit it when I do.

Last week I sent emails out to all the people that had served on committees during the 2013-2014 NASE year. (At least, I hope I got everyone notified.) If I had home emails I sent the message to both work and home, to make sure I reached everyone. I asked all committee persons to confirm whether or not they were willing to serve on the committee again AND to complete a Profile.

This is one of those tasks that is official NASE business and not agency business and so it really should be completed on personal time and personal email. For that reason I asked each of you to forward to your personal emails (if you have them) and to complete the process on your own time. I have not heard back from every one by any means and if you have just not taken the time to respond please do so. If, as you read this, you have not received an email please let me know. I may have missed you or, as my emails sometimes do, it may have gone to spam or junk.

I also attached to my emails a description of the duties of each committee so you would know what was expected of you. Again, if you believe you were on a committee last year and did not receive an email, please let me know.

State Contacts

All state association presidents should either be appointed, or each organization should elect, a state contact to be the liaison with the NASE executive board. Please provide your state contact information to me so that we can make sure it is posted to the internet on our website. I will be contacting all previous state contacts to verify information but if I do not get in touch with you, please let me know.

If your state is not organized (no state association) those of you within your state should work together to decide who would be the primary contact in your state.

Thank you for allowing me to serve as President for 2014-2015.

Marilyn Jo McMullen
PO Box 1774, Bozeman, MT 59771-1774
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mjomcmullen@aol.com or marilyn.mcmullen@mt.usda.gov

2014-2015 NASE Board **Zone Representatives**

Marilyn McMullen

Montana
President

Angela Biester

Nebraska
Vice-President

Heather Culwell

Kansas
Secretary

Rhonda Hoffman

Nebraska
Treasurer

Cindy Porter

Nebraska
Past President

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PROGRAM COMMITTEES

Cathy Rakes

Nebraska
Farm Loan Committee

Jill Uffelman

Montana
Farm Program Committee

Tanya McIlravey

South Dakota
Information Technology
Committee

The role of the zone representative is that of an intermediary between the states within their zone and the NASE Executive Board. The zone representatives should maintain a line of communication between the states and NASE Executive Board. The Zone representatives should participate in meetings and conference calls and share information and ideas conducive to the welfare of the Association.

The nation is divided into four zones, as follows:

<u>Zone A</u>	<u>Zone B</u>	<u>Zone C</u>	<u>Zone D</u>
Alaska	Iowa	Delaware/MD	Alabama
Arizona	Kansas	Illinois	Arkansas
California	Minnesota	Indiana	Florida
Colorado	Missouri	Kentucky	Georgia
Hawaii	Nebraska	Maine	Louisiana
Idaho	North Dakota	Massachusetts/	Mississippi
Montana	South Dakota	CT/RI	North Carolina
Nevada	Oklahoma	Michigan	Puerto Rico
New Mexico	Texas	New Jersey	South Carolina
Oregon		New York	Tennessee
Utah		Ohio	
Washington		Pennsylvania	
Wyoming		Vermont/NH	
		Virginia	
		West Virginia	
		Wisconsin	

Please do not hesitate to contact your zone representative if you have any questions, comments, ideas or concerns.

Zone A Representative

Jill Monson
California
jill.monson@ca.usda.gov

Zone C Representative

Barb Painter
Illinois
barb.painter@il.usda.gov

Zone B Representative

Teresa DeLaCruz
Texas
teresa.delacruz@tx.usda.gov

Zone D Representative

Beth Perkins
Louisiana
beth.perkins@la.usda.gov

An Idea for Comment

It has been suggested that NASE offer a different kind of membership for support employees that would offer access to information. Management and supervisory employees can now join NASE as supportive members for \$20 per year. They have no voting rights or anything. Support (non-management/non-supervisory) employees of Farm Service Agency are now expected to be full-fledged members, however, the suggestion is to grant support employees an in-between type membership (associate) that would put them on a mailing list to receive information. They would be able to submit resolutions but would not have voting rights within the organization.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK OF THE IDEA. Does it have any merit?

Request for Information – CARS Reports

IT Committee - Tanya McIlravy, Chair

Tanya McIlravy, NASE IT Committee Chairperson recently held a call with Kansas City IT regarding CARS. NASE has been asked to provide **specific examples of reports** that we (FSA field staff, not just NASE) want to be able to pull from CARS. Tanya told them the goal is ad hoc reporting like we had with the System 36 query option, including the ability to tie for example name and address with acreage reporting data in order to generate a mailing list to use for creating letters. They agreed that is the ultimate goal. However, in the short term, they want to provide what they can/what we need most.

So, please, as soon as possible, reach out to as many farm program techs/state offices as you can and request **specifics/samples of reports** that they have pulled from the System 36 in the past, as well as any manual tallies they keep as well so we can provide it to the KCMO teams. **Please have responses to Tanya McIlravy (tanya.mcilravy@sd.usda.gov) by Aug 12th.** (If they come in after that forward them anyway as this is an ongoing process).

YOUR INPUT IS NEEDED. PLEASE, PLEASE do not hesitate to provide it.

We always hear/say we wish there were things we could do and now is our chance to have some input into making those things happens. Please take a few minutes to put your thoughts down and send them on.

Use LincPass to Protect Yourself and USDA

Be Part of the 80% Solution

USDA has set a goal regarding LincPass; the goal is that 80 percent of its employees will use their LincPass to access the Department's networks and data. This goal is part of a Federal initiative to fully use the capabilities of the LincPass to protect our facilities, our networks, and our information.

USDA's wide-ranging missions affect the health, well-being, and quality of life of all Americans. Allowing the wrong individuals access to our data can contribute to the billions of dollars lost through cyber-supported crime. Using your LincPass for logical access to the networks and physical access to our facilities is one of the easiest ways to combat the theft of intellectual property.

Training is available on AgLearn that provides you information on the benefits of using your LincPass and where to go for help. In addition, there is a USDA Connect site where many questions about LincPass are being addressed:

<https://connections.usda.gov/communities/community/LincPass>.

Join Secretary Vilsack and the rest of your colleagues in making our systems safer and more secure by using your LincPass to access the Department's networks and data.

How to Effectively (and Respectfully) Solve Office Conflicts

When a group of people with different, roles, ideas and personalities need to work together, there's bound to be conflict. Tempers can flare out of control, and pretty quickly the initial disagreement can become obscured in mistaken meanings and unintended slights.

No matter how great our working relationships are with coworkers, there's bound to be disagreements from time to time – and that's actually fantastic. Disagreements force us to think outside the box, and can create stronger, more creative solutions in the workplace.

But they can also escalate into truly hostile situations if they're not handled

How to Effectively (and Respectfully) Solve Office Conflicts

(cont)

Courtesy of GovLoop

gracefully. Keeping these five tips in mind will help you solve office conflicts before they get out of hand, and hopefully find a result that works for everyone along the way.

1. Figure out what you're disagreeing on

This seems basic, but the truth is that while *on the surface* you may be arguing about how to launch a new initiative, *in reality* the argument could be about something completely different. Are you really disagreeing over the choice of font in the website redesign? Or are you actually upset over the way you weren't included in the process from the beginning?

In work and in life, most conflicts have deep undercurrents. Getting to the root of the issue will help you not only resolve the current problem more effectively, but can help smooth the road for problems to come.

2. Listen, listen, listen

I'm the worst at jumping in halfway through my partner's sentences to argue against the point I *assume* he's trying to make – especially when tempers are high. I'm so ready to defend my position I sometimes don't realize that there's nothing to defend against. If I'd just take the time to listen thoroughly to what he's saying – rather than focusing all my attention on formulating my next argument – then we could have a much more rational, productive conversation.

Workplace arguments are no different. Take a moment to listen to what your coworker is saying before jumping to conclusions. Try summarizing her argument back to her, to make certain you understand it completely before laying out a counter-argument. It may turn out that your disagreement is really rather small – or that you're not actually disagreeing about anything at all.

3. Stop assuming intent

Your coworker left you off the email chain – was it an intentional slight, or just an oversight? Your boss just handed one of your regular duties over to someone else – does she think you're incompetent? Or is she just freeing up your time to take on tasks that are more in line with your skill set?

It's only natural to guess at the meanings behind people's actions, but to keep a healthy work environment you need to acknowledge that you can't actually know what anyone's intent is. Unless you ask them, of course.

If you're feeling stung by a coworker's action, address it directly instead of letting the feeling ferment. Let them know how you perceived their action, and give them a chance to explain the actual motive behind it.

4. Talk it out in person

Nothing adds fuel to the fire of conflict like vague, passive aggressive emails. When we're put in an emotionally charged situation, it becomes all too easy to seek out double meanings in our coworkers' words. Maybe you sent an email meant to be brief and businesslike, but your coworker assumed you were terse and annoyed. Maybe your coworker sent you a request for information that you perceived to be bossy and belittling.

Rather than sit and seethe at the hidden meanings you're sure are behind every sentence, get out from behind your screen and go talk to your coworker face to face. In-person conversations help deescalate conflict because they force us to remember we're talking with actual people, not just faceless entities in our computers.

5. Separate the person from the issue

Try to maintain an objective point of view about the disagreement, and don't identify too personally with your position. Ask yourself if you're arguing as a matter of pride, or if you really feel that the solution you're advocating is the best choice. In the same vein, make it clear that your disagreement is with your coworker's position, not with your coworker personally. Avoid using words like "you" and

"yours," which could make your coworker feel attacked and defensive. Remember: at the end of the day everyone in the office is (hopefully) working toward the same goal.

JM Marketing

Thank you JM Marketing –

NASE is to receive a check from JM Marketing as a part of our agreement with them. NASE receives funds from JM Marketing whenever our members take advantage of any of their products. Thank you also to NASE members!

Phased Retirement is Finally Here

// Kellie Lunney

After more than two years in federal regulation limbo, the law allowing federal employees to partially retire while continuing to work part-time for the government is finally being implemented.

Eligible federal employees can submit their applications for phased retirement beginning Nov. 6. The Office of Personnel Management on Thursday filed the [129-page final rule](#) on the new program for publication in the *Federal Register* on Friday. The so-called phased retirement provision, included in the 2012 transportation reauthorization act, allows eligible feds to work 20 hours per week, receiving half their pay as well as half their retirement annuity. Those employees who enter phased retirement must devote at least 20 percent of their work time, or about 8 hours a pay period, to mentoring other employees, ideally for those who take over for them when they fully retire.

[Read the entire story here.](#)

10 Tips for Your First Year in Federal Government

- by [Heather Kerrigan](#)

Congratulations! Whether working for the federal government has been a lifelong dream of yours, or you're here because you needed a job and your new agency was hiring, you're embarking on a wonderful adventure. Working in the public sector is most often wholly different than the private sector: In government, you are impacting not just the mission of your organization, but citizens across the country. It will be fun, fulfilling, and frustrating all at the same time. To get you started in your new career, here are 10 tips for your first year:

1. Understand the Terms of Your Employment

This can be said about any job, but it is particularly important as a federal at-will employee with a probationary period. You need to find out how long your probationary period is (most likely, it's one year), how your performance will be reviewed, how you are classified, where you will be placed on the pay scale, the conditions for advancement or demotion, when you get paid, what the sick and annual leave policies are, whether you are able to earn a bonus or annual pay increase, whether a flexible work schedule is possible, and what opportunities are available for advancement. When you begin your career, it is also a good idea to find out any restrictions your agency places on your personal activities. For example, as a federal employee, you are restricted from giving a public speech in favor of a candidate running in a partisan election.

2. Take Advantage of All the Benefits Offered

[Read more here](#)