

NSO Contact

National Staff Organization

May 2009 Issue

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Hot on the RA Agenda . . .

- **Keynote by NEA President Dennis Van Roekel**
- **Election of Region 1, 3, 5, 7 and At-Large A and B directors**
- **Passage of 2009-10 budget with no dues increase**
- **NEA interest in presenting another Organizing Institute**
- **NSO and NEA identification of potential problematic affiliate bargaining and cooperating in addressing those situations**
- **USW "Make our Future Work" initiative**
- **Employee Free Choice Act**
- **Increasing pension costs**
- **California tentative agreement**
- **ISTA financial dilemma**

Van Roekel will address 2009 RA delegates

Budget, elections top business items

In his keynote address to the 2009 Representative Assembly delegates, Dennis Van Roekel, newly-elected NEA president, will share his vision for NEA and what he sees as staff's role in that vision.

"The mission and vision of NEA absolutely define who am, what I care about, and what I believe in," said Van Roekel.

His keynote address is scheduled for Saturday, June 13.

RA Delegates will be gathering in Jacksonville, Florida, June 12-13 to conduct NSO business.

As part of that business, RA delegates will determine the 2009-10 budget and who will sit on the Executive Committee.

The NSO Executive Committee will be recommending passage of the new budget to the delegates. The proposed budget does not include a dues increase.

An election for NSO Executive Committee positions will also be held. Delegates will be voting for Region 1, 3, 5 and 7 directors and two at-large director positions. The newly-elected directors will be serving a two-year term.

Currently, the Region 7 and At-Large A director positions are contested races. Candidates interested in running for an office must submit a Candidate Petition to the NSO Elections Chair by no later than 10 a.m. on June 12. Their petition must be signed by three NSO members. Candidates can also be nominated from the RA floor. They must be members in good standing and submit a Candidate Petition with the signature of three NSO members. Go to www.nationalstaff.org and click on "NSO Elections" to download a petition.

NSO delegates will have a chance to network at a Solidarity Reception on Friday, June 12. An orientation for first-time delegates will be held on June 11.

Go to www.nationalstaff.org to hear NSO President Chuck Agerstrand's preview of the 2009 RA.



Newly-elected NEA President,
Dennis Van Roekel



Andrea Prejean, NEASO President, addresses fellow union brothers and sisters at the rally sponsored by AFSE. The rally at the NEA building was to support the NEASO bargaining team's efforts to secure a new contract.

NEASO rallies in support of bargainers

The NEASO bargaining team finished a difficult session and was met with cheers from their colleagues at a unity rally staged at the NEA building and hosted by AFSE

NEASO had been waiting for a financial proposal from NEA and were hopeful that a settlement could be reached this month. Those hopes dimmed when the team received a management proposal that called for rollbacks and increased employee costs.

The proposal came on the heels of the NEA Pension Board's vote to increase contribution costs.

For continued updates on NEASO's bargaining, go to www.neaso.org.

ISTA insurance fund facing multi-million dollar deficit

NEA establishes trusteeship; Executive Director resigns

The Indiana State Teachers Association (ISTA) has been placed under an NEA-directed trusteeship in the light of serious financial problems with its insurance fund.

Warren Williams, ISTA Executive Director, resigned last week and NEA has assigned Eddie Sullivan, former Executive Director for the Massachusetts Education Association as the interim Executive Director.

The ISTA Board of Directors voted to have NEA establish a trusteeship over ISTA, effective immediately. Bill Thompson, Director of NEA Financial and Membership Services, will be overseeing the Association's finances.

A May 15 Indianapolis Star article broke the news that the FBI and Indiana Secretary of State are investigating the handling of high-risk investments by the union. According to the news report, the Indiana State Teachers Association Insurance Trust is facing a potential \$67 million deficit. The Trust pays for long-term disability benefits to teachers in 90 of the state's nearly 300 school corporations and health insurance in 30 school districts.

In the short-term, the fund isn't expected to fall into bankruptcy this year; the Trust doesn't have enough money to cover disability payments over the long term. Since the fund is self-insured by ISTA, individual school districts would have to pick up the tab.

The health program has been losing money and a tentative deal with United Healthcare was made with the new insurer taking over the health insurance program July 1.

The ASO/NSO affiliate continues to bargain a new contract. Some progress has been made but there is still no TA. PSO currently has a contract.

John Wilson, NEA Executive Director, has committed to communicating with NSO on any developments that may impact our Indiana members.

Pension Benefits Committee reviews affiliate concerns

The NSO Pension Benefits Committee met May 9-10 in Chicago to address the growing concerns of affiliates over increasing pension costs.

“Many affiliates are being affected by the economic downturn. Defined benefit plans will be forced to make decisions on funding, plan structure and the impact on bargaining,” said NSO President Chuck Agerstrand.

The passage of the Pension Protection Act is causing funding issues for employers in the form of higher pension obligations. Recent action by the NEA Retirement Board is a prime example. They voted to increase the contribution rate to 10 percent, retroactive to May. The NEA Pension Board supported the vote. If the NEA passes on this cost to states, this will place a huge burden on smaller states under the NEA Pension Plan.

At its recent meeting, the NSO Pension Committee again committed resources to training and communications to help states deal with the issue. A survey to determine characteristics of affiliate pension plans is being developed. The Committee is also considering initiatives that will include joining with private sector labor unions in pursuing legislative relief.

The goal of the NSO Pension Benefits Committee is to secure the best possible pension benefits for NSO affiliates and members by

- Providing current and accurate pension benefit information.
- Providing retirement and pension training.
- Informing affiliates of legal and financial responsibilities of pension and retirement plans.
- Providing training for NSO pension plan trustees within affiliates.
- Developing criteria and strategies for establishing and improving affiliate pension plans.



The NEA Retirement Plan was a key topic of the NSO Pension Benefits Committee meeting. Members of the Committee are (front right) Ron Goldenstein (NE) Chair, NSO Treasurer; Mort Reinhart, NSO Pension Consultant; Dan Gottheimer (MD); Pat Chavez (NM) NSO/NEA Pension Trustee; Liz Tokar (CA/CAS); Joel Solomon (NEA/NEASO) NEA Pension Trustee; Michael Coleman (AR) Alternate to NEA Pension Plan and NSO Executive Committee; Maryann Jandoli (NJ); Dan Frattini, NSO Retired

Oregon PSO sets new external goals

While the Oregon Professional Staff Organization (PSO) successfully navigated a contentious strike last year, when it was done, they knew they needed to review their organizational goals, incorporating the lessons they learned. PSO's role in championing OEA members is a key element of their new goals.

Guided by their motto, “partners in advocacy,” PSO approved a series of goals to guide them as a staff union in both the short and long term. All of their goals center on their desire to be role models in the cause of union values and public education, and to champion the rights of Oregon Education Association members.

Their goals are not just words on paper. They've put them into action with a series of regional advocacy conferences for OEA members. Bargaining was a featured topic at all of the conferences, along with sessions on leadership skills and conflict resolution. Training is provided by PSO members.

To read more about PSO's advocacy goals, go to www.oregonedstaff.org.

NSO wins Iowa termination case

An arbitrator has ruled that an Iowa State Education Association (ISEA) employee's termination was unreasonable, an abuse of discretion, and without just cause. ISEA has been ordered to reinstate the employee with full back pay and all benefits and to place him in the same position he would have occupied prior to the termination.

The NSO member was terminated in 2007 for poor job performance.

NSO argued that contractual procedures for termination under job performance were not followed. Specifically, the employee was denied follow-up evaluations and a chance to improve by management.

Despite ISEA's claims that they were justified in their disciplinary action, Arbitrator Robert Brooks emphatically sustained the grievance.

"The employer has indicated they're considering an appeal, but with such a decisive win for our member, I can't image what grounds they might have," said NSO Advocate John Reilly,

NSO supports 'Buy American' resolution

The NSO Executive Committee meeting has joined more than 100 states and municipalities in endorsing the United Steel Workers (USW) economic renewal resolution, "Buy America."



In January, the USW kicked off a "Make Our Future Work" campaign. The "Buy America" resolution is part of the effort to ensure that our tax dollars are used to create jobs at home and to refocus the American economy on manufacturing. The hope is that the effort will help rebuild the middle class and our nation. The resolution has been introduced in nearly 600 states.

"The goal of buying American is important in stimulating job recovery and our economic recovery. We're asking our affiliates to make this a top priority," said NSO President Chuck Agerstrand.

To help you start the program in your community, go to www.usw.org/buyamerican to download a toolkit.

EFCA will boost labor movement

NSO supports momentous legislation

The Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) represents some of the most important labor legislation before us in decades. Under the EFCA, workers would be allowed to form a union when a majority of the employees want one. It will also stiffen the penalties on employers who harass, intimidate and fire workers who support a union.

A key aspect of the legislation would require employers automatically recognizing an employee union when a majority of the employees has signed union authorization cards. No election would be necessary. Currently, the employer decides whether an election will take place if they choose not to voluntarily recognize the union.

The proposed bill would also penalize employers who illegally fire or retaliate against pro-union workers during an organizing campaign. Such penalties as awarding an employee three times the amount of back pay for wages lost and the ability to sue for injunctive relief from an employer are some of the recommendations under the Act.

The EFCA is critical to our economic recovery. Unions raise wages and benefits for their members. When unions are strong and able to represent the people who want to join them, these gains spread throughout the economy. All workers benefit from union efforts and all workers have more purchasing power. This helps our economic recovery.

NSO fully supports the Employee Free Choice Act. The RA will be encouraged to adopt a new business item affirming the endorsement. *(continued on next page)*

EFCA will boost labor movement *continued* . . .

Editor's Note: At their May 14 union meeting, the North Carolina Staff Organization (NCSO) voted to endorse and support the Employee Free Choice Act. After the motion was made by Robert Blackwell, At Large A Director, and seconded by Ed Kimball, it was passed unanimously.

NCSO President Tyrone Melton said, "This is a piece of legislation critical to our economic recovery. It will benefit all workers, as well as union workers, because we will have more purchasing power."

Leadership Academy returns

NSO will again sponsor a Leadership Academy on January 14, 2010, just prior to the Winter Advocacy Retreat.

The target audience is new presidents and emerging leaders who have been in leadership for two years or less. There will be openings for 100 participants.

Sessions will focus on what leadership is and what characteristics make up a good leader. Attendees will also review facilitation skills such as conducting an effective meeting and Robert's Rules of Order.

NSO Executive Committee members will serve as trainers.

Turn to NSO for training needs

Affiliates needing training assistance in any area, can access quality, timely assistance through NSO.

Lynn Adler, NSO Vice President of Program, provides qualified trainers in the training areas of facilitation, conflict resolution, bargaining and crisis. Marius Ambrose, NSO Vice President for Defense, will provide trainers for grievance, arbitration, ULPs and legal defense.

"NSO's practice is to send the most qualified person to meet the specific request," said Adler.

The request for assistance begins with affiliates contacting their NSO Region Director. The request is then forwarded to either Adler or Ambrose. It's the intent of NSO to send someone who is highly qualified and geographically close.

NSO will cover the expenses of the approved trainer.

NSO Calendar

2009

June 12-13 Representative Assembly; Jacksonville Florida

July 22 Winter Advocacy Retreat RFPs due

Oct. 7-11 NSO Executive Committee

2010

Jan. 14 Leadership Academy; Sarasota, FL

Jan. 15-16 Winter Advocacy Retreat; Sarasota, FL

March 24-28 NSO Executive Committee

June 11-12 Representative Assembly; San Antonio, TX

National Staff Organization

The world's largest union of union staff—that's what the National Staff Organization has become. Through the efforts of literally hundreds of staff leaders, NSO has grown from a mere 35 members in a handful of states in 1969, to 5,013 (as of August, 2008) from 89 affiliates in 50 states and the District of Columbia. A major portion of that growth came with the decision by the 1978 NSO Representative Assembly to organize associate staff members.

Today, NSO has over 2,300 full-time and over 106 part-time associate staff members.

NSO Executive Committee

President – Chuck Agerstrand

Vice President for Defense – Marius Ambrose

Vice President for Program – Lynn Adler

Treasurer – Ron Goldenstein

Secretary – Mary Henson

Region 1 – Cheryl Singleton

Region 2 – Butch Santicola

Region 3 – Emmitt Jimmar

Region 4 – John Stephens

Region 5 – Kathy Hill

Region 6 – Michael Coleman

Region 7 – Rosemary Wolf

At Large-A – Robert Blackwell

At Large-B – Ruth Ivory

Communications – Rosemary Carey

Web – Miriam Garcia

Check out the web site, www.nationalstaff.org
for the latest news and updates on bargaining.
