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A Letter from NASCOE's President

Kelly Sundy <pacoe_nascoe@yahoo.com>

Mon, Oct 7, 2013 at 10:10 AM

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Dear NASCOE members:

As we head into possibly another week of furlough, I think it is good to consider how your organization has performed in this trying time. If there ever was a time you could ask, "What is NASCOE doing for me?" it would be this past week. Your NASCOE leadership from officers, area executives, legislative chairs, benefits chair and on down to state presidents have been engaged in the process of advocating on your behalf and making sure you have the latest information. Just a few of the efforts thus far:

- A CAPWIZ alert was issued so that members could communicate to Congress the need to pass a budget and back pay employees for furlough days. This alert also encouraged Congress to use program funds to help fund staffing for fiscal year 2014. Thus far 842 advocates have sent approximately 2,700 messages to Congress.
- Multiple updates from our legislative consultant and legislative committee have been sent out by area executives to state presidents.
- All updates concerning the shutdown have been posted on the NASCOE Facebook page and the NASCOE website for members to review including a letter from our associate administrator with information on filing for unemployment benefits.

- Our national benefits chair Elyse Musil has prepared a Government shutdown fact sheet to assist members with issues ranging from stress to unemployment filings.
- We have also posted the furlough packet emailed to you at the office in case you forgot to print it as you left your county office on Tuesday.

Almost every day your state presidents have received information from national leadership with progress concerning returning to work. If you aren't receiving updates I would encourage you to make sure you are enrolled in the membership database so we can share information with you. If there ever was an example of why we need to be able to communicate with all members through nongovernment emails this would be it. I want to challenge state presidents to revitalize their efforts to gain contact information for each member and load this in the database on our website. It is an easy process. We can have more than one person approved to load so please develop a plan immediately.

On Saturday morning the House of Representatives passed House Bill HR 3223 which would authorize back pay for furloughed Federal employees. The Senate and President have both promised to support this legislation. The budget and the debt ceiling are two large obstacles that are preventing us from returning to work. Your leadership team will have a conference call with our legislative consultant on Monday, October 7, and rest assured the notes from this call will be posted immediately to let you know what is happening concerning the shutdown.

I know that each of you enjoy public service. You take pride in being a Federal Employee of an agency that puts conservation on the land, provides assistance in time of disaster, makes low cost loans for grain storage, gives acreage reports to crop insurance when claims are filed, and offers benefits to producers in times of low prices so they stay on the land providing a cheap, safe food supply for our country. I know you are looking forward to getting back on the job of assisting American agriculture.

I am hopeful that this furlough ends soon but if it doesn't, rest assured that NASCOE will continue to keep you informed and will keep looking for ways for members to be engaged in the process. If you have suggestions concerning how we can do that better please let me know at m_vanhoose@yahoo.com.

Sincerely,
Mark VanHoose