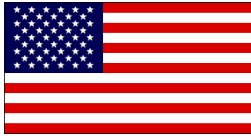


National Association Support Employees (NASE)

Weekly Update

03-28-2011

By: Susan E. Long, NASE President



I PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG, OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, AND TO THE REPUBLIC, FOR WHICH IT STANDS, ONE NATION UNDER GOD, INDIVISIBLE, WITH LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL!

THOUGHTS FOR THE WEEK:

"It is our attitude at the beginning of a difficult task which, more than anything else, will affect its successful outcome." ~William James~

"Four short words sum up what has lifted most successful individuals above the crowd: a little bit more. They did all that was expected of them and a little bit more." ~A. Lou Vickery~

NASE at work

Nancy Fuchs - NASE Past President: FSA-2303 is not working correctly. It used to fill the dates in automatically for us. Have the macros been turned off?

Bill Cobb – DAFLP: The macros have been turned off as they were not working properly in the current version of Word. Instead of the dates pre-filling from macros, we now have guidance (that must be removed/overwritten) regarding the date that is to be entered in the field.

Resource Committee and Membership

The Resource Committee will be starting a membership drive soon. The exciting details will be coming soon! In an effort to get the drive started Sandy Grammer is asking all members to provide the name and office address of all FLP PT's in your state (or any state) that are not members and the same for an eligible employee, such as state office PT's, that you think may be interested in joining. Please provide this information as soon as possible and she will see that each receives a personal invite to join NASE. Please email the information to bosagrammer@aol.com or sandy.grammer@in.usda.gov.

We are also asking for any ideas you may have on how to recruit new members. We would like to hear any and all ideas! Please get them to Sandy ASAP.

Please check the NASE Weekly Updates for more information on the upcoming membership drive. We will need the help of all members to step up to the challenge of membership recruitment!

Annual NASE Awards

It is time to begin the selection process for the 2011 annual NASE Awards. The Resource Committee has opened nominations for the following awards:

SPIRIT AWARD: This award will be given to a NASE member who has been a member of NASE for less than two years and has made a significant contribution to NASE on either the local or national level.

HORIZON AWARD: This award will be given to a member of NASE who has been a member of NASE for more than two years and has made a significant contribution to NASE on either the local or national level.

BLOOD, SWEAT & TEARS AWARD: A nomination for the NASE Blood, Sweat & Tears Award is an honor befitting those who have performed well above the call of duty on behalf of the members of our Association. Do you know someone who has served as an officer, been involved on task forces, committees or a Zone Rep or Alternate? Do you know someone who has worked above and beyond their normal duty requirements to NASE? Do you know someone who has continued to support NASE since their term of office was completed? Do you know someone who has diligently worked on behalf of NASE?

SED OF THE YEAR AWARD: To nominate your SED, please submit a narrative describing how our SED has been supportive to the Association. The state Making a nomination for this award should have an active membership that is recognized b their SED.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE AWARD: If you know of a State Representative that has done a really good job, show them that you appreciate their hard work by nominating them.

BEST NEWSLETTER AWARD: Please forward your state association's newsletters for consideration of this award.

All nominations, with the exception of the Newsletter, should be at least one paragraph explain why your nomination has earned the award they are being nominated for giving details of their accomplishments. Nominations **MUST** be received by Sandy Grammer (see emails address above) **NO LATER THAN 4-20-11!!**

Remember hard work, dedication and service deserves to be award so get those nominations in by 4-20-11!!

Resolutions-Resolution-Resolutions-Resolutions-Resolutions-Resolutions-Resolutions:

It is that time again....time to get your regulatory and computer application ideas flowing and put those ideas on paper (or word document). It is time to start applying your creative writing skills. You have extraordinary ideas on ways to make your workday flow so much better then it flows now; share those ideas on a Resolution form. You have extraordinary ideas on ways to improve computer applications; share those ideas on a Resolution form. I hear grumbling as I travel about the SURE Program worksheets, the Guaranteed computer applications, the DLS system, the eCORP software, etc.... You can make it better, all you have to do is write it down!!!

Where do you get the wonderful Resolution forms to write up your creative ideas? On the NASE website, of course. ☺

Do you know where to send your Resolution forms when you get them completed????? How about sending your Resolution forms to your State Contact? If you do not know who your State Contact is you can locate them on the NASE Website. If you do not have a State Contact you may send your Resolution forms to Sheree Krogstad, NASE Resolution Coordinator.

With NASE's Resolution Process, **all of YOUR ideas** are given consideration, first at the Zone Meetings, then on to the National Convention where resolutions are voted on by the full membership...those members are YOU. The successful resolutions from the National meeting are sent to the National Office, Farm Credit Applications Office, Finance Office and/or Kansas City for determining feasibility. In the Past, NASE has seen most resolutions put into permanent practice! As I travel around in my job, I hear frequently how forms, regulations and daily activities can be changed for the better, made more efficiently. NASE must have those ideas written down and sent to your State Contact and/or Sheree Krogstad, NASE Resolution Coordinator so your ideas can be acted upon. We are all ordinary people with extraordinary ideas...share them.

Check out the AFCU (Agriculture Federal Credit Union) website:
<https://www.agriculturefcu.org/>

BUDGET:

Little Word on Shutdown Plans

Many individual employees as well as federal unions have expressed frustration recently over lack of information from agencies regarding shutdown contingency plans. The government once again is operating under a short-term extension of previous budget authority, this one running through April 8, but patience for continuing that pattern is wearing thin among

political leaders. Shutdown talk has been in the air for more than a month but so far agencies have released only general descriptions of who would be required to stay on the job and who would be furloughed. More specific plans are being held at OMB, which has indicated that those plans likely won't be released until a shutdown is imminent. Also still up in the air is whether all employees would be paid retroactively after the shutdown is over, as was done in the past, whether only those who remain on the job will be paid, or whether no one will be paid.

Connolly and Moran: Myth Busters

By Emily Long Monday, March 21, 2011 12:33 PM

Two Virginia Democrats are losing patience with other lawmakers using federal employees as "political punching bags." In a letter sent last week to members of Congress, Reps. Gerry Connolly and Jim Moran tried to set the record straight on some of the common misconceptions about government workers:

Myth: Most federal employees live in or near Washington, D.C.

Fact:

85% of the federal workforce does not live in this region. Texas has more federal employees than Maryland, and Alaska has more federal employees per capita than Virginia.

Myth:

Federal employees earn far more than private sector employees, on average \$120,000 per year.

Fact:

Federal employees earn 22-24% less than private sector employees in comparable jobs, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which conducts the most in-depth study of pay. The widely-cited \$120,000 figure inaccurately counts future pension payments, which include employee annuity contributions, as wages.

Myth:

Most federal employees work in agencies related to education, regulation, or welfare.

Fact:

63% of federal employees work for agencies whose primary purpose is national security. The smallest executive branch departments are Education and Housing and Urban Development.

Myth:

The federal government has grown larger than ever before.

Fact:

The federal government is the smallest it has been in the last 60 years, relative to the US population and size of our economy. The number of federal civilian employees per 1,000 Americans has shrunk steadily from 13.2/1,000 in 1962 to 8.4/1,000 today.

Myth:

It is nearly impossible to fire a federal employee.

Fact:

11,668 federal employees were fired last year.

Lawmakers, union leaders and government observers have long been at odds over whether federal workers are overpaid or underpaid compared to their private sector counterparts. A key point of contention is the methodology used to calculate employee compensation. Labor economists use a "human capital" comparison that takes into account how certain characteristics such as experience and education affect workers' pay. The government uses data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics on comparable jobs in the public and private sectors. During a [March 9 hearing](#) on federal pay, Office of Personnel Director John Berry admitted that neither the BLS methodology nor the government's pay structure is ideal, noting calculations cannot capture the complexity of today's workforce. Janet Kopenhaver, Washington representative for Federally Employed Women, said a lack of facts is fueling the anti-fed sentiment among lawmakers and the public.

"The misunderstanding of the federal workforce, including pay, location and size among others, has reached fever pitch and it is seriously feeding the anti-federal worker emotion on Capitol Hill as well as beyond the beltway," said

Kopenhagen. "The fact that legislators are making decisions on how to vote on specific bills and amendments based on this faulty data has us extremely concerned."

TECHNOLOGY:

Can Android take BlackBerry's government job?

Google's device leads the smart-phone market, but weaknesses stand in the way of government adoption By Dan Rowinski Mar 16, 2011

The latest numbers in the smart-phone wars are in, and they have telling consequences for how government employees are going to interact with each other — along with agency managers and even the public — in the near future.

In a report released March 8, the research firm comScore said total market share of Android smart phones, powered by Google's mobile operating system, had surpassed market share for Research in Motion's BlackBerry by a clear margin.

Between October 2010 and February 2011, comScore reported, BlackBerry lost 5 percentage points in the overall smart-phone market, from 35.8 percent to 30.4 percent. Meanwhile, Android gained almost eight percentage points — from 23.5 percent to 31.2 percent.

If you are a federal employee and wonder why you should care about a few decimal points of market share, it's because the shift marks the emergence of a technology that's likely to be a standard-setter for social and professional communication in government for years.

It's a pattern that has played out many times before.

Impact of Japan quake on IT supplies continues to grow

Parts shortages, increased prices could be most acute in three months By Kathleen Hickey Mar 23, 2011

Japan's recent environmental disasters — a large-scale earthquake and ensuing tsunami, followed by concerns over nuclear plant meltdowns — are causing electronics shortages and increased prices on components such as chips, flat-panel displays and other components for computers, cameras and tablet PCs.

The extent of the situation is unknown, as companies have released little information on disruptions, reported the **New York Times**. There is also no timetable for when electric power and infrastructure problems will be resolved, further adding to the situation.

Japan is a major supplier of electronics components, with Toshiba producing roughly one-third of the world's chips, the Times reported. Toshiba, Sony, Canon, Hitachi, Sanyo Electric and Fujitsu have closed factories and are still evaluating the extent of the damage, including damage to nearby roads, railroads and ports.

Hewlett-Packard, Lenovo and Apple, which rely on parts supplied by Japanese manufacturers, will also be affected. Even if a plant is operational, rolling blackouts are limiting manufacturers' abilities to keep up with demand.

"Though production has increasingly been outsourced to China, South Korea and other lower-cost markets, there are over 40 factories in Japan producing a significant proportion of the world's PC and smart-phone components," Tim Coulling, PC analyst at Canalys, told **Reuters**.

Ocean carriers have canceled and rerouted shipments to Japan, further reducing the country's ability to move goods and increasing transportation costs, reported the **Journal of Commerce**. Cargoes that would typically go by ocean are shifting to air due to damaged and closed ports; however, there is limited airplane cargo space due to flight reductions and reduced plane weight limits as a result of the need to carry extra jet fuel, also leading to increased costs, the JOC reported.

Ripples from the disaster are already being felt in other countries, including China and Taiwan, reported the Times and JOC. Global mining company Rio Tinto reported the disruptions posed a threat to its expansion plans, Reuters reported.

Supply shortages will likely be most acute in three months, Malcolm Penn, CEO of research firm Future Horizons, said in a [BBC story](#).

"This will start to bite home in a few weeks' time when the first shortages start to appear and hit hard even further in about three months' time when the production that isn't being made today should have been coming online," he told the BBC.

RETIREMENT:

Are Cuts Coming? By Tammy Flanagan, [National Institute of Transition Planning](#)

Lately, it seems everybody has an idea for cutting federal retirement benefits in the name of balancing the budget. The Congressional Budget Office has [weighed in](#) following an earlier [set of proposals](#) from the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform. Last week, a group of Republican senators got in on the act, [introducing legislation](#) that would eliminate the basic retirement benefit under the Federal Employees Retirement System for everyone hired after 2012.

In the 30 years I've been working in the field of federal employee benefits, I've never seen a time when so many proposals affecting the financial security of federal retirees were floating around. None of the ideas has been implemented -- yet. But with so much emphasis on cost-cutting, and so many people making the case that government benefits are overly generous compared to the private sector, it seems like the stage is being set for real changes that could affect retirement benefits, cost-of-living adjustments, Social Security and even the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program.

Working Longer

Before 1920, there was no federal retirement system. Employees just kept working -- sometimes past the point where they could provide useful and efficient service. Those who wanted to retire had to rely purely on their personal savings.

Now, a substantial portion of the typical federal retiree's income is derived from defined benefits such as a retirement check and Social Security payments. Reducing these sources of income would make for a much more uncertain retirement. Consider that it takes roughly \$300,000 in investments to produce around \$1,000 a month in income. And keep in mind, there are many variables affecting how long you can draw on such funds before you run out of money: How much is the principal earning each year? How risky are your investments? Are the withdrawals taxable? How long do you expect to live? Is anyone else depending on you so that the money would have to last more than one lifetime?

Suppose Congress and the White House agree on cutting back on federal retirement benefits, increasing employee contributions to FEHBP and raising the Social Security eligibility age. That could have ripple effects across the federal workforce.

Many employees would have to work longer to save enough money to cover their living expenses when they retire. That would leave fewer job openings for people looking to enter the workforce. And for employees who don't have enough money left over each month to save for their retirement, losing the FERS basic benefit, paying more for health insurance and having to wait longer for Social Security benefits could be devastating.

I hope the people making these proposals think long and hard about the possibility of ending up with a growing population of elderly people on welfare. That certainly wouldn't help the budget situation. It's worth remembering the words of President Franklin Roosevelt when he signed the 1935 Social Security Act:

We can never insure 100 percent of the population against 100 percent of the hazards and vicissitudes of life, but we have tried to frame a law which will give some measure of protection to the average citizen and to his family against the loss of a job and against poverty-ridden old age.

Defending Benefits

I'm confident groups representing federal employees and retirees will make their voices heard in the coming debate over benefits. They will have their work cut out for them, but in the past three decades, most of the changes in federal benefits have been positive, thanks in large part to the effort of these groups.

Here are some of them:

- [National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association](#)
- [American Federation of Government Employees](#)
- [National Treasury Employees Union](#)
- [National Federation of Federal Employees](#)
- [Federal Managers Association](#)
- [Senior Executives Association](#)
- [Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association](#)

I'm sure there are other groups also working to protect and preserve federal benefits. If you know of any, feel free to note them in the comments section below.

HR:

Experts call on agencies to narrow performance goals

Federal agencies have far too many complex performance goals and should streamline their top priorities and objectives to bring about optimal results for taxpayers, witnesses told a Senate task force on Wednesday.

Under the 1993 Government Performance and Results Act, agencies were required to set myriad goals encompassing virtually every area of their work. The Obama administration has asked agencies to narrow that focus, honing exclusively on a series of "high-priority performance goals."

But a top outside adviser to the Obama administration told the Senate Budget Committee's Task Force on Government Performance that more still can be done to reorganize the government's performance management structure.

"There are still too many so-called high-priority performance goals -- 128, to be exact -- and many are decipherable only to people inside government," said John Podesta, a White House chief of staff under President Clinton who now is president of the Center for American Progress, a progressive advocacy group. "Fewer, more resonant goals would raise their profile and better communicate government priorities to the public."

Podesta said the high-priority goals that agencies have set thus far "leave much to be desired" because they are overly technical and focus on activities more than results.

Task Force Chairman Sen. Mark Warner, D-Va., agreed that agencies are trying to accomplish too much and in the end, achieving too little. "If you have 50 priorities, then you have no priorities," Warner said.

Podesta said agencies should set no more than five high-priority goals, with one targeting operational savings and assigned to the chief operating officer, who would have budget and decision-making authority.

"These goals should state in clear, quantifiable terms what the agency will achieve for the American people and how much money it will save by cutting waste in procurement, information technology and other operations," Podesta said.

Witnesses suggested Congress took a step in the right direction last year with passage of the GPRA Modernization Act, which requires agencies to set clear, cross-cutting goals during a two-year time frame. Agencies also must identify the programs, tax expenditures and regulations that contribute to the given goal. Performance reviews will be required quarterly and will be posted on a single government website.

Witnesses outlined a litany of problems with the existing performance management system, including a host of duplicative programs (some of which work against one another), a lack of accountability from departmental leaders, and a failure to connect program outcomes with future appropriations.

The system must have been developed "by someone on crack," said Robert Shea, associate director of the Office of Management and Budget under President George W. Bush.

"Although it may seem obvious, traditionally agencies have had difficulty setting ambitious outcome-oriented goals, either because measuring outcomes is hard and requires coordination across multiple programs or departments, or because being accountable for difficult-to-achieve outcomes is scary," said Shea, now a principal with Grant Thornton LLP.

The lack of high-level attention to outcome-oriented budgeting and evaluation also can be frustrating to the federal workforce, he suggested.

"Congress and the executive branch are focused more often on policy or politics, rather than on the sometimes tedious, yet important work of managing and monitoring program progress," said Shea, who led the Bush administration's government performance initiative. "This reality frustrates agency and department leadership producing reports, data and analysis, because it means they invest considerable time, energy and money on information no one will use."

The government's top watchdog told the task force that presidential administrations and Congress have created programs before establishing what they should accomplish and the metrics for measuring success. "It's not always clear what these programs want to achieve," said Gene Dodaro, comptroller general of the Government Accountability Office.

Earlier this month, GAO released a report on overlap and duplication among programs throughout the bureaucracy. That report, Dodaro said, was downloaded 90,000 times in its first day of public availability -- three times more than any previous GAO report.

Warner suggested that the administration develop an early warning mechanism for alerting Congress when a new program under consideration appears to be duplicative to an existing initiative. Dodaro agreed with the concept but noted that there is no single governmentwide inventory of every federal program and its purpose.

Pay Reform Ideas Circulating

Several ideas for overhauling federal compensation are in circulation following recent House hearings on pay. OPM director John Berry has suggested improving the performance evaluation system to set clearer expectations and give employees better feedback, and a working group of HR directors has started examining the possibilities. That would represent a retreat from an earlier administration statement of intent to abolish the GS system and replace it with career ladders. The head of the House federal workforce subcommittee, Rep. Dennis Ross, R-Fla., meanwhile has said he wants to tie pay more

closely to performance and emphasize performance expectations in other ways, such as by extending the standard probationary period for new hires from one year to two. Federal employee unions typically resist such efforts—they succeeded in killing the NSPS system at DoD and a main target after the representation election at TSA concludes will be the pay for performance system there—although they have expressed openness to strengthening the performance element in within-grade raises. However, in a sign of the difficulties of making such changes, AFGE walked out on discussions at DoD over creating alternative personnel rules to replace NSPS, due to a controversy over the participation of one of the union's representatives.

FEHB Children's Coverage Clarified

OPM has sent guidance to agencies on the change in law that took effect at the start of this year extending children's FEHB eligibility up to age 26. It notes that to include a newly eligible child in the coverage, an enrollee who has self-only coverage must switch to self-and-family coverage. It is up to the enrollee to make that decision, apart from where court order requires family coverage. Nor can an enrollee remove a child from self-and-family enrollment except by switching to self-only coverage. Also, children under age 26 who are federal employees themselves are covered under a parent's FEHB family policy unless the parent is in a health maintenance organization plan and the adult child lives outside its coverage area, or unless the adult child has a spouse and/or child or children of his or her own for whom the child wishes to get coverage. Unless one of those exceptions applies, a federally employed adult child covered by a parent's family coverage cannot enroll in FEHB on his or her own account until turning age 26, at which point enrollment will be allowed, even outside an open season, as a qualifying life event. The guidance also describes more restrictive policies applying to foster children.

DoD Employees Urged to Go Electronic

The Defense Finance and Accounting Service, which processes salary and other payments for most DoD employees, is asking those who still receive paper statements to switch to electronic delivery of pay information if at all possible, saying the cost of paper statements comes to about \$2.6 million a year. It said that about 275,000 employees still receive biweekly statements in the mail, even though many of them also are accessing the same information online. The mailing costs are passed on to the workers' components, reducing their available budgets, and mail delivery increases the risk of statements being lost or stolen and used in identity theft, it said.

Ins and Outs By Emily Long

Federal employees hear about changing their health insurance coverage during an annual open season, but it's not often they are reminded to review their options for long-term care insurance.

The Office of Personnel Management in January announced that open season for the Federal Long-Term Care Insurance Program will run from April 4 through June 24. The program, which assists with health care costs for participants who need help with daily personal functions, or who have a severe cognitive illness, covers home care or care in a nursing home or assisted living facility, benefits not often included under health insurance plans.

This year, same-sex domestic partners of federal workers for the first time will be able to enroll in the program. Participants also will be able to choose from expanded coverage options under the FLTCIP 2.0 plan.

Open season for the long-term care insurance program doesn't come around often. With that as background, take our quiz to find out if you're ready.

1. Who is eligible for long-term care insurance coverage?

- a. Only current federal employees can apply for this benefit.
- b. Active government workers and annuitants, along with their spouses, parents and children are eligible.
- c. Federal employees, military personnel, retirees and their relatives, including same-sex domestic partners, are allowed to participate in the long-term care program.

2. How much will my premium cost?

- a. Long-term care premiums are the same as those in the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program and fluctuate each year.
- b. Premiums depend on your age at enrollment and the level of coverage you select and will remain stable unless OPM approves a change.
- c. Nothing. My agency pays for this coverage.

3. Who can apply for coverage under abbreviated underwriting rules, which require only limited health information?

- a. No one. All insurance forms require full disclosure of medical history.
- b. Active federal workers, their spouses and same-sex domestic partners will have to answer fewer questions than will retirees and other relatives.
- c. Only newly hired employees have this option.

4. Are there multiple plan options, or am I restricted to certain benefits?

- a. Just like FEHBP, enrollees have more than 200 plans to choose from.
- b. There are two plan types, but participants can choose from a range of coverage periods and daily benefit allowances within each option.
- c. All enrollees are restricted to one plan.

5. Can I change my coverage if my needs change?

- a. Yes. You can increase or decrease your benefits at any time.
- b. Yes, but only during open season.
- c. No. Your initial election locks you into a specific plan.

MISCELLANEOUS:

USDA Spending \$60 Million on Three Climate Change Studies

The Agriculture Department is spending \$60 million on three new research projects examining the effects of climate change on crops and forests.

The three studies bring together researchers from a wide variety of fields, encouraging them to find solutions appropriate to specific geographic areas. One study will focus on Midwestern corn, another on wheat in the Northwest and a third on Southern pine forests.

“What the climatologists have predicted is that the areas that were at one time wet will in fact be dry and hot, not wet and cool,” said Roger Beachy, director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, an arm of USDA. “If that’s correct, then we need to have varieties of crops that will grow in those areas and are adaptable to the changes in the climate. So really it comes down to if we don’t do this, we may have some food shortages in certain kinds of foods.”

Markets make robust rebound - Agriculture.com

For the second consecutive day, the CME Group corn market has hit 'limit' up Friday. Following fresh, bullish acreage estimates from a private firm, and confirmation of a China purchase of U.S. corn, the markets are seeing rising prices across-the-board.

At mid-session, the May corn futures are up the daily "expanded" limit of 45 cents at \$6.91 1/2. The May soybean contract is 43 cents higher at \$13.79. The May wheat futures are 35 3/4 cents higher at \$7.46. The May soymeal futures are \$12.60 higher per short ton at \$371.20. The May soyoil futures are \$1.53 higher at \$56.05.

Think Tank: Rein In TRICARE Costs

The Defense Department must take several key steps to rein in health-care costs, or face a future in which they increasingly will consume resources that would otherwise be used to meet military commitments, according to a report by a Washington, D.C.-based think tank headed by a former senior Pentagon leader. The white paper, entitled "Restoring TRICARE: Ensuring the Long Term Viability of the Military Health Care System," points out that the Obama administration's \$52.5 billion request for TRICARE funding in the 2012 defense bill represents a 300-percent increase from the 2001 budget request. TRICARE funding now accounts for 10 percent of the total defense budget, the report states, largely because lawmakers have refused to make the tough decisions necessary to bring costs under control. Adapting the changes could save as much as \$15 billion annually, say the report's authors, among whom is Lawrence Korb, who served as the Pentagon's personnel chief under the Reagan administration. The report calls for:

- * Phasing in fee increases for retirees;
- * Increasing cost-sharing, to "encourage responsible use" of TRICARE for Life benefits;
- * Limiting double coverage for retirees with higher incomes;
- * And pegging TRICARE premiums to Medicare Part B costs.

Cash Offered for Winning Warfighting Vehicle Idea

The Defense Department's research agency believes that the institutional process of conceptualization and design of a new military vehicle takes too long, and that someone – a service member, a racing enthusiast, or a shade-tree mechanic – may be able to do the job more quickly. To that end, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) is offering a \$10,000 cash prize to the winner of its Experimental Crowd-derived Combat-support Vehicle Design Challenge. Contestants had to submit plans for two different missions – combat reconnaissance and combat deliver and evacuation – to DARPA by March 3. More information is available online at <http://www.local-motors.com/XC2V>.

Val Dolcini
Acting Administrator
Farm Service Agency
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C.



Val Dolcini was selected to serve as the acting Administrator for the Farm Service Agency in February 2011. He previously served as state executive director of the California Farm Service Agency, a position he was appointed to in 1999 by President Bill Clinton and again in 2009 by President Barack Obama.

As state executive director, Dolcini was responsible for overseeing 30 county offices responsible for administering farm programs and policies in one of the nation's largest agricultural states.

Dolcini has many years of public and private leadership experience. Prior to accepting the state executive director position, he managed government relations activities for Accenture LLC, a global consulting firm. In that position, he strategized with business teams about relationship development and consulted on a wide range of political matters.

He previously served in a senior staff position for the California governor and lieutenant governor as well as members of the U.S. House of Representatives.


A fifth-generation Californian and a native of Davis, Calif., Dolcini has served on numerous non-profit boards and commissions in his community.

Dolcini received his bachelor's degree in history from San Francisco State University and a juris doctorate from Golden Gate University School of Law

Wear RED on FRIDAY to support your American soldier. Do not forget them...the American soldier needs us as much as we need them! When you meet an American Soldier or Veteran...shake their hand, give them a hug, thank them for your freedom...they deserve our respect.

Five days into Operation Odyssey Dawn, costs mounting

By Megan Scully *National Journal* March 23, 2011

 U.S. officials said on Wednesday that coalition forces have suppressed Muammar el-Qaddafi's air defenses, but his ground forces continue to target population centers in Libya, feeding concerns that the operation could ultimately cost the United States billions -- and require the Pentagon to request emergency funding from Congress to pay for it.

Five days into Operation Odyssey Dawn, the bill racked up by the U.S. alone is undoubtedly already in the hundreds of millions of dollars. And the U.S. military, which remains in the lead now, will continue to pump millions more into strikes targeting military assets in Libya.

The cost of war is often as unpredictable as war itself -- a lesson the U.S. military learned the hard way on Monday when it lost its first major piece of equipment, an F-15 fighter aircraft that crashed because of a mechanical failure.

After nearly a decade at war, the Pentagon has routinely leveraged emergency funding to replace older fighters lost in battle with fifth-generation stealth aircraft. And, if the Libya operation is no exception, the Defense Department could seek to buy an extra F-35 -- with a price tag of more than \$100 million -- to replace the downed F-15.

The ultimate total the United States spends will hinge on the length and scope of the strikes as well as on the contributions of coalition allies. But Todd Harrison, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, said the U.S. costs could "easily pass the \$1 billion mark on this operation, regardless of how well things go."

The Pentagon has the money in its budget to cover unexpected contingencies and can also use fourth-quarter dollars to cover the costs of operations now. "They're very used to doing this operation where they borrow from Peter to pay Paul," said Gordon Adams, who served as the Office of Management and Budget's associate director for national security during the Clinton administration.

However, there comes a point when there simply isn't enough cash to pay for everything. The White House said this week it was not prepared to request emergency funding yet, but former Pentagon comptroller Dov Zakheim estimated the Defense Department would need to send a request for supplemental funding to Capitol Hill if the U.S. military's share of Libya operations expenses tops \$1 billion.

Such a request would likely be met with mixed reactions in a Congress focused on deficit reduction. And while many key lawmakers have been agitating for action in Libya, others have been more reluctant and have increasingly raised concerns about the mounting costs.

Senate Foreign Relations ranking member Richard Lugar, R-Ind., argued that Congress should have had the opportunity to weigh in on what he has warned will be a very expensive operation. U.S. budget dollars -- not to mention heavily deployed troops -- are simply spread too thin, he says.

"Congress has been squabbling for months over a budget to run the federal government for a fiscal year that is almost half over," Lugar said. "We argue over where to cut \$100,000 million here and there from programs many people like. So here comes an open-ended military action with no-end game envisioned."

So far, the operation has focused on creating a limited no-fly zone mostly targeting the capital city of Tripoli, which is Qaddafi's stronghold, and other areas along the coast. That will require a wide range of military assets.

In a report released earlier this month, Harrison estimated that the initial stages of taking out Qaddafi's coastal air defenses would cost between \$400 million and \$800 million. But the coalition is now targeting his ground forces in an effort to protect civilians -- a factor that Harrison said will drive up the initial costs of the operation.

"At some point, though, we will have degraded his forces to the point that there are not that many targets left," Harrison said on Monday. "So we'd expect to see the sortie rate start to drop off."

Meanwhile, Harrison estimated that maintaining a coastal no-fly zone after those initial strikes would cost in the range of \$30 million to \$100 million per week.

As Lugar and others have stressed, these unanticipated costs come at a time when the Pentagon is putting pressure on Capitol Hill to pass its fiscal 2011 budget. Continuing to operate under a stopgap continuing resolution through September, senior Defense officials argue, would amount to a \$23 billion cut to the military's request for the current fiscal year, which began on October 1. The Pentagon wants \$708.3 billion for this year, including \$159.3 billion for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

For the U.S. military, the highest costs of the operations over Libya come in the form of munitions, fuel for aircraft, and combat pay for deployed troops -- all factors that will pile up each day U.S. forces remain at the helm of the operation.

DISCOUNTS:

GIMME MY DISCOUNT:

Artwork: Federal employees are eligible for 40 percent - 70 percent off retail prices on framed Thomas Kinkade artwork through Thomas Kinkade Events LLC. To browse the gallery of offerings, [click here](#). Use the promotional code "govexec2010" to enter the site and at checkout.

Auto parts: The [Kragen Auto Parts](#) chain will knock 5 percent to 10 percent off your purchase if you have a military ID, one reader says. [AutoZone](#) offers military discounts as well, according to another reader, and [Advance Auto Parts](#) gives active and retired military members 10 percent off. R1Concepts.com offers 10 percent off [brake pads](#) and [brake rotors](#) to military personnel when you call in to order.

Baseops.net: A clearinghouse of military discounts.

Bass Pro Shops: Offers military and civilian discounts, a reader tells us.

Child care: [NannyPro.com](#), an online resource for parents seeking nannies or babysitters, offers federal employees 30 percent off family memberships. To claim the discount, visit the [company's website](#) and use the coupon code "Fedsave" at checkout.

Clothing: [Nautica](#) and [New York and Co.](#) give discounts of 10 percent or more to customers with military IDs, and [Old Navy](#) gives a 10 percent discount on the first of the month, readers say.

Fedsave.com: A free, monthly newsletter highlighting savings and special offers on entertainment, dining, shopping and travel.

Food: [IHOP](#), [Denny's](#) and [Long John Silver's](#) give military members 10 percent off, readers tell us. One reader noted that [Applebee's](#) gives discounts of 15 percent, and one said [T.G.I. Friday's](#) offers a 10 percent discount. The [Hard Rock Cafe](#) offers military members discounts of 10 percent or more.

Gift baskets: [GiftTree.com](#) offers military members 15 percent off on most gift baskets, flowers and other merchandise. According to the company, "To access the discount, simply visit our [website](#) and enter the promotion code MILITARY67 at checkout." [Wine Country Gift Baskets](#) is giving military members 5 percent off baskets, flowers and fresh baked goods. Enter the catalog code "Military" at checkout.

Government Employees Marketplace: A free service that offers members exclusive discounts on everything from pet health insurance to rental cars, and aggregates information on thousands of other deals.

Group Health Eye Care: Offers federal employees, military members and retirees a 20 percent discount on prescription eyeglasses or sunglasses, and a one-time 20 percent discount on contact lenses. Membership is not required.

Gyms: Civilians and military members qualify for a discount at [Washington Sports Clubs](#). As of early November 2010, the gym was offering feds \$17 off monthly memberships.

Home improvement: Readers tell us [Lowes](#) and [The Home Depot](#) give military members and retirees 10 percent off at most locations, but the discount isn't always advertised so be sure to ask about it if no information is readily available. [Menards](#) gives shoppers with a military ID or VA identification card 10 percent off, according to one tipster, but the policy seems to vary from store to store because another reader said a branch in Wisconsin denied him a military discount. [Long Fence and Home](#) offers deals to federal employees and military members -- employees should contact the company to get an estimate of how much the discount would be.

Insurance: Federal employees receive 3 percent to 10 percent off on automobile insurance at [Geico](#), depending on the state. Readers tell us they've found insurance deals at [Liberty Mutual](#) as well. And [Capitol Benefits](#) of Gaithersburg, Md., has partnered with [Travelers](#) to offer federal employees in the Washington area a break on home, auto, renters, boat and umbrella insurance.

National Convention – Salt Lake City, UT

June 19th – 23rd, 2011

Information will be provided at Zone Meetings!!!!

Life Elevated

NACS/NASP/NASE National Convention 2011



CONVENTION UPDATE



USDA Farm Service Agency - USDA Rural Development

Dates
Sunday, June 19th
Thursday, June 23rd

Convention Board:

Chair:
Donna.Birk@ut.usda.gov
FSA Co-Chair:
Steve.Bartholomew@ut.usda.gov
RD Co-Chair:
Janice.Kocher@ut.usda.gov
FSA State President:
Travis.Cartright@ut.usda.gov
RD State President
Kathy.Brynes@ut.usda.gov

Plans are well underway for a really great convention. Some members might want to come in early on Saturday, as we are planning a couple optional activities.

Saturday at 5 pm take a ride on the "Fun Bus" to casinos in Wendover, NV for dinner and entertainment. Sunday we will be offering a noon trip to the "Olympic Park and Museum" in Park City with a stop on historic Main Street with plenty of shopping and dining opportunities. Day activities are being planned Monday through Wednesday for families and retiree's.

The Sheridan Hotel is the place to be, check out their website @ <http://www.starwoodhotels.com/sheraton/property/overview/index.html?propertyID=1327>

Registrations will be ready for Zone Meetings. Watch for upcoming announcements on the NACS SharePoint site:
<https://rd.sc.egov.usda.gov/team/rd/nacs/2011/default.aspx>

Mark your calendars.....get ready....your associations are preparing for another fantastic National Convention.

What Does NASE Do? What can you do as a NASE member?

Promote the betterment of the Farm Service Agency

Help to Improve all FSA programs

Improve service to the public/our customers

Establish a cooperative relationship at all levels of FSA

Help establish policies that best serve the public interest in accomplishing the mission of USDA and FSA

Improve support staff effectiveness

Improve morale, esprit-de-corps, and efficiency

Promote self-motivation, self education, and career enhancement

Promote the social, economic, civic and personal welfare of support employees

Assist and be supportive of the mutual concerns of all other FSA employee associations

All FSA employees that are non-supervisory are eligible to be regular members. Supervisor's, NASE needs your support and you may join as a supportive member at a reduced cost, an inexpensive way to show your support for all FSA non-supervisory employees.

If your state is unorganized, your dues can be sent directly to our National Treasurer, Rhonda Hoffman.



APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

2010-2011

I, _____ am applying for membership in the National Association of Support Employees and agree to abide by the Constitution and by-laws of the Association. My check for \$52.00 regular member or \$20.00 for supportive member is attached. I also agree that I will join my State Association at this time or when one is established.

Title: _____

Office Address: _____

Office Telephone: _____ e-mail: _____

Home Address: _____

Home Telephone: _____

Home e-mail: _____

Sponsor's Name: _____

(Please list the person who contacted you about becoming a member)

Check should be made payable to NASE

Please Mail Completed Form with \$52 or \$20 to:

“Open By Addressee Only”

Rhonda Hoffman

107 E Hwy 20, Suite C

O’Neill, NE 68763

allgolf@kmtel.net

402-336-3796, ext 118

God Bless America Lyrics by Irving Berlin



**God bless America,
Land that I love,
Stand beside her and guide her
Thru the night with a light from above;**

**From the mountains, to the prairies,
To the oceans white with foam,
God bless America,
My home, sweet home.
God bless America,
My home, sweet home.**