

# IN CONTACT



Newsletter of the National Staff Organization

January 2005

## **Two Hour Opening Session...**

## **Retirement Issues Top WAR College Concerns**

Two top labor attorneys presented realistic, no holds-barred presentations about the state and future of pension plans and post-retirement health insurance benefits during a special two-hour opening session of the 2005 Winter Advocacy Retreat. NSO legal counsel Rob Day and Former UAW



*Leonard Page*

and NLRB general counsel Leonard Page went through a litany of critical issues facing retirement plans and post retirement health insurance. Day emphasized the need for great care when bargaining retirement benefits for current employees and placed special emphasis on the need to insure benefits are thoroughly vested when the employee retires. Page acknowledged that Federal courts have not been friendly to retirees. The U.S. Sixth Circuit has been a notable exception where rulings have upheld the automatic vesting of benefits, including health care provisions, when an employee retires. The current case in Ohio where the Ohio Education Association's executive director unilaterally terminated health benefits for retirees over age 65 is likely to have a major impact, according to Page. "I'm surprised a union employer would do this,"



*Mary Ann Jandoli*

Page told participants. "My stomach turned at some of the OEA's Exec's 'choice' responses to why the action had been taken." At the request of NSO, Page met with OEA Executive Director Dennis Reardon and representatives of the unions as well as a coalition of retired employees. Page is with the law firm of Klimist, McKnight, Sale, McClow and Canzano of Southfield, MI. He was appointed as general counsel to the National Labor Relations Board by President Clinton – and was "fired" by President Bush. Page remarked that the United Auto Workers took special care in negotiations with their employees to guarantee lifetime health benefits for retirees. NSO retirement consultant Mort Rinehart reviewed the general status of pension plans, noting that employers in the private sector have found ways to drastically reduce



*Rob Day*



*A record 415 NSO leaders registered for the 2005 Winter Advocacy Retreat.*

or even eliminate pension plans. As employers terminate plans, the burden grows for the Pension Benefits Guarantee Corporation which puts even that minimal protection in jeopardy. "Now we see 'privitization' is this area – good for the have's and devastating for the have not's," Rinehart told the over 400 NSO leaders who attended the conference. Chairperson of the NSO Pension Benefits Committee Pat Chavez (NM - NSO Executive Committee member) and Mary Ann Jandoli (NJ) provided additional information about what NSO is doing to address the issues raised by Rinehart, Day and Page. Special efforts are underway to gather more information about NSO affiliate retirement plans and put that information in the NSO Web searchable database. Surveys were distributed to affiliates. NSO President Chuck Agerstrand (MI) emphasized that retirement benefits and post retirement health coverage will be major topics during the NSO National Bargaining Conference set for April 15-16, 2005 in the Grand Hyatt, Denver, CO. During the general session, President Agerstrand introduced NSO officers and executive committee members.



*Charlotte Frattini (NEASO), and Lois Tarr (NJ) staff the NSO Special Services Committee table during the WAR College.*

affiliates who had submitted their membership lists as required by the U.S. Department of Labor. To date, only a handful of affiliates have not sent lists to NSO. Each card has a unique identification number that NSO members can use to access a wide host of

discounts and savings programs through the NSO Member Benefits Web site which can be accessed off the NSO Web



page at [www.nationalstaff.org](http://www.nationalstaff.org). After registering on the site, members can receive information about discounts in their local area. Savings range everywhere from discounts on OfficeMax products and BOSE stereo equipment to special rates at national motel chains. Members can save up to 50 percent on everyday purchases like: fast food, casual dining, dry cleaning, auto service and repair, health and beauty products, movie tickets, video rentals, family entertainment, golf, ski passes, hotel rooms, vacation packages, luxury cruises, outdoor recreation, and more. Educator Access has over 100,000 name-brand retailers in the program. Some of those include: Tony Roma's, Valvoline, Best Western, Carnival Cruise Lines, Mrs. Fields Cookies, Meineke, Holiday Inn, Pearle Vision, A&W, ChemDry, The Sharper Image, and FTD.com. By entering the ZIP code where the member lives – or plans to go – a list of discounts and special offers for that area are listed. Members of the NSO Special Services Committee are: Mary Henson (MI), Ed Helvey (OH), Lois Tarr (NJ), Charlotte Frattini (NEASO), Charyl Singleton (MA), and Blackwell.

### ***CORE Group Gives, Gets a Hand***

Members of the Coalition of Retired Employees of the Ohio Education Association ("CORE") provided information about their litigation against OEA. In addition to sharing a special flier for WAR College participants, they answered questions. A collection taken during the WAR College opening session netted \$2,646 for their cause. Their president is NSO-R member John Wardell whose e-mail address is [coreofoea@aol.com](mailto:coreofoea@aol.com). For additional information, CORE's Web site is: [www.coreofoea.com](http://www.coreofoea.com).

### **NSO Member Cards Distributed**

NSO At-Large Executive Committee member and NSO Special Services Chair Robert Blackwell (NC) led distribution of the new NSO "Access" membership card. Committee members Charlotte Frattini (NEASO), and Lois Tarr (NJ) report good responses to the new NSO Membership "Access" Cards. Affiliates picked up their new cards staffed by members of the NSO Special Services Committee. Individual names were embossed on cards for

## President Presents Presidents' Issues



President  
Agerstrand

NSO President Agerstrand gave an overview - preview - of the WAR College to NSO affiliate presidents Jan. 13. In addition to praise to NSO Vice President Lynn Adler (IL) and Secretary Mary Henson (MI) for their work on the WAR College, he recognized the contribution of "waste management" guru Marius Ambrose (MD). As Vice President for Defense, Ambrose handles all of the defense and arbitration advocacy service for NSO affiliates. "Not a day goes by I don't talk to Marius about defense issues of one sort or another," says Agerstrand. "We call him the 'waste management' director because he had to deal with all that management waste." Whether legal or grievance, both Agerstrand and Ambrose stressed the need for early notice. "We're a volunteer organization and it is often difficult to line up an advocate on a short term basis," says Ambrose. "I have some good retirees who help, but I don't want to burn them out. We're always looking for good advocates." Extensive databases on arbitration awards as well as staff contracts is maintained by NSO on its Research Website. Agerstrand urged that each affiliate send its president and chief negotiator to the NSO National Bargaining Conference April 15-16, 2005, in Denver. Many of the issues dealt with during the WAR College and reviewed by Ambrose will be covered during the



Members of the NSO Executive at the 2005 WAR College: Front row, L-R: Sec. Mary Henson (MI), Reg. 7 Rosemary Wolf (WA), Pres. Chuck Agerstrand (MI), Reg. 3 Emmitt Jimmar (AL), VP Program Lynn Adler (IL), Second row, L-R: Reg. 4 John Stephens (CA), Treas. Evelyn Smith (IL), Reg. 2 Butch Santicola (PA), Third Row: Reg. 6 Ron Goldenstein (NE), Reg. 1 Cheryl Singleton (MA), VP Defense Marius Ambrose (MD), At-Large B Pat Chavez (NM), At-Large A Robert Blackwell (NC), Reg. 5 Ed Helvey (OH).

National Bargaining Conference. Agerstrand also encouraged affiliate presidents to attend the NSO-NEA Labor-Management meeting set for May 10, 2005, in Chicago. "We need to pick up where we left off last year," Agerstrand said. "Most of the critical issues on our agenda here at the WAR College will be covered in Chicago." NSO anticipates the L-M meeting will take place in a hotel near O'Hare Airport. NSO Treasurer Evelyn Smith (IL) emphasized the critical need for each affiliate to send her a copy of their LM and 990 reports as required by the U.S. Department of Labor. She said NSO was pleased with the good response by affiliates who sent membership lists to NSO also required by DOL. She also stressed the need for affiliates to update those lists electronically on the NSO Research Website. Those pages are heavily protected and can only be accessed by an authorized agent with a password. The ability of NSO to issue NSO membership "Access" cards generates from those lists.

## NSO's M/O Committee Unveils Basic Guide

Members of the NSO Merger/Organizing Committee presented an in-depth preview of the new NSO Organizing Guide and accompanying training materials. Mike Horner outlined "Organizing: A Guide for Staff Unions," to NSO affiliate presidents during the Retreat. The Guide consists of three "books" - a Nine Chapter Text with an Appendices and Resource Documents, including power points. The Committee plans to distribute the Guide in hard copy and on CD to all affiliates by late Spring 2005, according to NSO director and Merger/Organizing Committee Chairperson John Stephens (CA). During the WAR College, the M/O Committee distributed an updated promotional brochure and DVD and VHS copies of NSO's special video with three segments: "A Union for Union Workers," "Diversity," and "Relationships." Members of the Merger/Organizing Committee (shown below meeting) are: Tom Martin, Butch Santicola, Bonnie LePage, Tom Suhrbur, Jesse Moore, Jo Berry-Segna, Mike Horner, Ginny Ross, Bob Linquist, David Crim, Sue Vento and Stephens.



## 2004-2005 NSO Calendar

Below is the current calendar for NSO events during the 2004-2005 year. Be sure to check the NSO Web page for calendar updates.

*National Bargaining Conference*  
Apr. 15-16, 2005  
Grand Hyatt, Denver, CO

*NSO-NEA Labor-Management Summit*  
May 10, 2005  
Chicago, IL

*NSO Representative Assembly*  
June 10-11, 2005  
San Diego, CA



Wanda Van Pelt (IL) shares practical tips with NSO affiliate presidents as part of her work session. Thirty different sessions and workshops were offered to 2005 Winter Advocacy Retreat participants.

### Web Site Usage Continues Climb

The NSO Web site ([www.nationalstaff.org](http://www.nationalstaff.org)) continues to be a useful tool for NSO affiliate leaders and the general membership, according to Webmeister Bob Mullins. The page had been updated with the new NSO membership card that includes a link to the new NSO Member Benefits Web page. The Web Server Statistics reports for November shows continued strong use of the page. On average, the page receives 555 hits a day or 6,537 for the 30-day period. Of significant note, the WAR College 2005 page received 450 hits during November with 327 downloads of the 2005 NSO WAR College Registration form. We receive hits from all over the world, now including two from - of all places - Iran. (None from Iraq, though.)

### Record Attendance at WAR College

Once again, the NSO Winter Advocacy Retreat ("WAR College") had a record number of leaders and guests – 415! They had from 30 different sessions to attend that ranged from "Basic Unionism" and "Dysfunction in the Workplace" to "Practical Tips for Presidents" and "Organizing Around Possibilities." For a complete listing of those offerings, go to the 2005 Winter Advocacy Retreat planning page here. During the Presidents' Meeting and the expanded Opening Session, NSO President Chuck Agerstrand praised the work of NSO Vice President for Program Lynn Adler (IL) and NSO Secretary Mary Henson (MI) for their work in organizing and preparing for the 2005 Retreat.



WAR College participants had a chance to relax at the annual Gulf Coast Buffet on Friday night.

**Be Sure to Check  
the NSO Web page at  
[www.nationalstaff.org](http://www.nationalstaff.org)**

NSO Contact is edited by Bob Mullins.



Comments and suggestions are welcome, and should be sent to Mullins at:

525 Meadoway Park,  
Worthington, OH 43085

Phone: 614-436-3398

NSO Contact FAX: 614-436-3570.

Internet: RobertM109@aol.com.

**NSO Web Page**

<http://www.nationalstaff.org>

**President:** Chuck Agerstrand, (517) 332-6551  
**Vice President for Defense:** Marius Ambrose, (410) 997-3440  
**Vice President for Program:** Lynn Adler, (312) 494-0607  
**Secretary:** Mary Henson, (800) 292-1934 x 6215 (O), (517) 622-1985 (H),  
FAX (secure) (517) 622-1892

**Treasurer:** Evelyn Smith, (217) 968-5348  
**Region 1:** Cheryl Singleton, (617) 878-8657  
**Region 2:** Butch Santicola (724) 457-6337  
**Region 3:** Emmitt Jimmar, (205) 446-8117  
**Region 4:** John Stephens, (209) 478-6091

**Region 5:** Ed Helvey, (614) 895-1041  
**Region 6:** Ron Goldenstein, (402) 475-7611  
**Region 7:** Rosemary Wolf, (253) 765-7082  
**At-Large A:** Robert Blackwell, (910) 347-7623  
**At-Large B:** Pat Chavez, (505) 982-1916

**Financial Advisor:** Vera Stafford, 269-52104341, FAX (Secure) 269521-7529