

INSSO CONTACT



Newsletter of the National Staff Organization

June 2004

Special NSO Rep. Assembly report...

'A Year of Highs and Lows,' says Agerstrand



"This has been a year of highs and lows," NSO President Chuck Agerstrand told the 2004 Representative Assembly. "The retirement of Dennis Krueger and death of Emil Oxfeld were definitely the lows. But, we have some highs. We are stronger and better organized than ever in our

served with distinction are now at peril. We need to take a stand. We can't be intimidated and we need to develop strategies at the state level to fight this issue." The Executive Committee opted to design the Winter Advocacy Retreat to devote a special all member session to the issue. "If you experience these things, you need to energize our new members." On a political level, Agerstrand attacked the efforts by the Bush Administration to "privatize and de-unionize" the country. "States are having severe finan-

history. The Spanish Peaks effort showed how solidarity paves the way for a new contract. Pennsylvania had difficult contract bargaining, but a satisfactory outcome. It was able to avoid a strike through major organizing. We found in Pennsylvania and Colorado that when people pull together for a common cause, we can accomplish good things." Agerstrand noted continuing challenges, including difficult negotiations in Alaska again. The National Education Association Staff Organization (NEASO) contract is "up for grabs." They will return to the bargaining table. One of the greatest challenges is recent management actions to eliminate health care benefits for retirees. "Our colleagues in Ohio face this very serious issue," says Agerstrand. "Our retired members who



With 309 delegates, NSO once again records its largest ever Representative Assembly. The RA took place in New York City, NY, June 11-12, 2004.

cial difficulties. These attacks are outrageous." Agerstrand asked affiliates to join with him and the NSO Executive Committee to help defeat George Bush. "We have to live with the hand we've been dealt. And, we have to deal with these problems. The Bush Administration has threatened our civil liberties. We have color coded alerts. We're asked to report 'suspicious' people with no guidance. Frankly, patriotism is more than flag waving or bumper stickers." On another front, Agerstrand said the one-day NSO-NEA Labor-Management Summit was a positive event. "Employers and NEA recognize that a lot of states are having serious problems. This may be a way for management and the union to come together. The group recognized the importance of funding pensions and provide good security for employees. Certainly, the goal was not to tear up contracts, but to maintain benefits for the future. But, managers and employers cannot do it alone. We need conversations with employers. I told the executive directors who attended that NSO has a special Health Task Force which may be a vehicle to bring those efforts together." Agerstrand went on to review the work of the Health Task Force. During the Assembly, delegates were asked to provide NSO with information about their dental and vision insurance. It is one area in which NSO might provide a cost-effective benefit to members.

Volunteers Backbone of NSO Advocacy



In her report to the RA, NSO Vice President for Program Lynn Adler (IL) expressed appreciation for all of the NSO members who provided help to NSO members and affiliates. She reported the Winter Advocacy Retreat had the

highest attendance ever. Adler told delegates she is looking for WAR College session ideas. Details about the request are posted on the NSO Web page. "Many affiliates requested assistance and, as always, there were multiple requests from many of these affiliates," Adler reported to the Assembly. "Our affiliates are working hard at developing strong, effective leaders and leadership teams. It is our great fortune to belong to a union in which so many people voluntarily give their time and talent to benefit all of us. And so, to everyone who graciously accepted calls to assist, train or facilitate: THANK YOU!"

Busy Year for NSO Defense Activities



NSO Vice President for Defense Marius Ambrose (MD) provided an overview of defense assistance to members and affiliates over the past year. "We had 29 affiliates that were provided with field or telephonic assistance," Ambrose said. "That represents 35 percent of all NSO affiliates." Among issues covered: • failure to post and fill a position; • violation of member rights; • workload; • discipline; • evaluations; • terminations; • wage garnishment; • pension violations • termination of health coverage for retirees; • unit dissolution; • holiday pay; • unilateral change by the employer of health insurance coverage; • reprimand and discipline; • unfair labor practice over workload; • training and assistance for organizational development; • disability denial; • pension calculation; • transportation reimbursement; • overtime. "This year, state affiliate management has attempted to reduce their costs by terminating retiree health benefits in Ohio and reducing retiree benefits in Iowa. This is just the beginning. We must develop strategies to address this reality." Marius asked NSO legal consultant Rob Day to review the issue with delegates who emphasized the need for strong contractual language to protect retirees.

Crisis Fund Healthy

It was reported to the Assembly that Akshay Javeri, Senior Vice President and Financial Advisor with Morgan Stanley, told the NSO Finance Committee that the Charlie Love Crisis Fund return on investments was a healthy 7.8 percent. A review of the NSO investment plan was shared with RA delegates. Under the structure, NSO takes a "conservative" approach to investment, with approximately 60 percent in bonds and bond related funds. As of May 31, the Crisis Fund stands at \$2,256,750.

Merger-Organizing Active



NSO Region 4 Director and Merger-Organizing Committee Chair John Stephens (CA) reported a very active year for the Merger-Organizing Committee. NSO helped plan and design the NEA Organizing Institute that took place

2004-2005 NSO Officers and Executive Committee

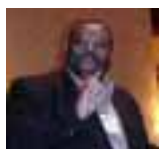


NSO officers and executive committee members posed for their annual "Class Picture" following the NSO Representative Assembly. Front row (L-R): VP for Defense Marius Ambrose (MD); Reg. 4 Director John Stephens (CA); Treasurer Evelyn Smith (IL); Reg. 7 Director Rosemary Wolf (WA); At Large B Director Pat Chavez (NM); VP for Program Lynn Adler (IL); Reg. 3 Director Emmitt Jimmar (AL); Secretary Mary Henson (MI). Back row (L-R): Reg. 5 Director Ed Helvey (OH); President Chuck Agerstrand (MI); Reg. 6 Director Ron Goldenstein (NE); Reg. 2 Director Butch Santicola (PA); At Large A Director Robert Blackwell (NC); Reg. 1 Director Cheryl Singleton (MA). All officers and directors for Regions 2 and 4 were reelected. Ron Goldenstein was elected to the vacant Region 6 director position.

in New Mexico last December. It is the only staff organizing training conference. Among other projects:

- Revised the "Advocacy in Action" promotional brochure which outlines in detail the NSO's program of service and defense on behalf of members.
- Updated the "NSO-The Union" video with new faces and new interviews taped during last year's Representative Assembly. The committee also added a new section which highlights the diversity within NSO - "...clearly a major component contributing to our strength and effectiveness as a union," according to Stephens. "The video is a great relational organizing tool designed to help educate our new staff members about NSO - who we are and what we stand for."
- The committee has continued to work to complete the NSO Crisis Organizing Handbook which will be a complete guide to assist affiliates in organizing for bargaining and other crisis.
- The committee also proposed to the NSO Executive Committee the concept of an NSO Leadership Academy.

NSO Membership Card In the Works



NSO At Large A Director Robert Blackwell (NC) told the RA the NSO Special Services Committee is working to develop a special, individualized membership card for NSO members. "The NSO Access Membership Card will

provide a broad selection of lifestyle benefit programs," he said. "These programs provide the members with up to 50 percent discounts at over 100,000 hotels, golf courses, ski resorts, adventure travel suppliers, condo resorts, restaurants and amusement parks, to name just a few." The Special Services Committee plans for the coming year include:

- Completing the NSO Membership Database Project - get all NSO members in the NSO Membership database.
- By September, if all members are in the database (target date is August 1, 2004) we expect to send names and affiliates' name to Access Development Inc., for the production of the first NSO membership card.

"The Special Services Committee will continue to work to provide the best benefits package available anywhere to our members. However, it should be very clear that a major factor contributing to our success or failure will depend on whether each affiliate submits their membership list," Blackwell adds. The U.S. Department of Labor requires NSO to have a full membership list, including home addresses.

2004 Budget and New Business Items Adopted

In addition to passing a budget of \$859, 347.50, the Representative Assembly passed five New Business Items. 1) A study will be made to determine the "value and impact" of having staggered terms for officers. 2) All commercially produced campaign materials used by a candidate shall be union-made,

2004-2005 NSO Calendar

Below is the current calendar for NSO events during the 2003-2004 year. Be sure to check the NSO Web page for calendar updates.

NSO Executive Committee
Sept. 30-Oct. 2, 2004
Boston, MA

NSO Winter Advocacy Retreat
Jan. 14-15, 2005
Sarasota, FL

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

made-in-the-US material and printed by union printers and include the union bug. 3) The NSO Executive Committee is to "explore the creation of a 'Solidarity Committee.'" Purpose of the committee is to inform and educate NSO members about issues and struggles confronting the broader labor movement and to determine what collective action, if any, NSO can take to assist in these struggles. 4) Proposed budget and dues amounts are to go to affiliates no less than 60 days prior to the annual Representative Assembly. 5) The 2004 RA recommends to the 2005 RA an NSO Constitutional provision (Article IX, Section 6) that would read: "The submission of all dues (General Funds, and Charlie Love Crisis Fund Dues), Affiliate membership lists and Department of Labor (LM) Reports shall be received by the NSO by June 1 of each year." 6) NSO recommends the election of John Kerry for President of the United States.

NSO Membership Holds Its Own...

NSO membership held at 4,961.5 (a small .411 percent drop) thanks to an increase in associate staff membership, says NSO Reg. 5 Director Ed Helvey (OH). The breakdown of members show 2,497 (full time equivalent) associate staff and 2,340 professional staff (FTE). (FTE membership is 4,837.)

Leberknight Awarded Oxfeld Advocacy Award

The Emil Oxfeld Advocacy Award was given posthumously to Ohio leader Chuck Leberknight (shown right) who died of a heart attack in 1998.

Leberknight was an early leader with NSO and, for many years, headed NSO's research. He was president of the Ohio Professional Staff Union when it went on strike in 1997. "Chuck left a distinct mark of advocacy in



Ohio. He represented everything we know about advocacy," NSO President Agerstrand told the Representative Assembly. For more information about Chuck, check the NSO Web page. The special plaque was presented to current Ohio PSU President Peggy Chavez who was accompanied by Ohio Associate Staff Union President Deanna Nickless. "Chuck stood up to management," Chavez said. "He did everything to avert a strike in 1997, but did not work. We had a 28 day strike. It was through his dynamic leadership that the strike ended and we were better off than when we went out. He worked tirelessly for NSO and PSU." Emil Oxfeld was a long time labor consultant for NSO. Oxfeld died July 21, 2003. He was a pioneer in the area of civil rights and was a founding member of the New Jersey American Civil Liberties Union.

For a Complete Report on the 2004 Representative Assembly, Be Sure To Check the NSO Web Page
www.nationalstaff.org

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NSO Web Page

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Region 4: John Stephens, (209) 478-6091

Region 5: Ed Helvey, (614) 895-1041
Region 6: Ron Goldenstein, (402) 475-7611
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