



National Association of Farmer Elected Committees (NAFEC)
Summer 2023 Newsletter

Representing Farm Service Agency County Committee Members since 1965

Mission Statement:

The primary purpose of the National Association of Farmer Elected Committees is—and will always be—to promote and improve the farmer elected committee system for the local administration of farm programs. The coordinated effort will give us strength, and much more influence in Congress for the kind of farm programs America's farmers, ranchers and rural communities need in order to thrive

The County Committee System of FSA:
True Democracy at the grassroots level in
the People's Department





President Comments

From the NAFEC executive committee and legislative consultant we send greetings to all of you across this great land of the brave and the free. Many of you reading this current newsletter may not be aware that your role as a COC member is the only locally elected position within the Federal government with oversight of employees and federal programs. This is a true grass roots system of democracy in action. Because of this, not everyone would like to see this system continued. NAFEC stands ready and willing to continue the fight to maintain what is one of the best systems within government.

One of the questions we get a lot is: How can NAFEC assist COC's in better doing their job? In response to that question we have put together a list of things COC's can ensure they are reviewing at every meeting with their CED's. This list is found in exhibit 1 of this newsletter and is titled a County Committee Oversight checklist. We have made it in a form that can be easily added to your regular minutes each meeting and encourage all COC's to begin using this as a way to ensure both you and your CED's are completing and documenting many of the items that sometimes get overlooked.

Sincerely,

Jim Zumbrink
NAFEC President



ANNUAL MEETING IN COLLEGE STATION

NAFEC Officers and Board members met August 3-5, 2023 in College Station, Texas for their annual meeting in conjunction with the NASCOE national convention. NAFEC members participated in some of the general NASCOE sessions as they had speakers from the National Office that included, Administer Zach Ducheneaux, Deputy Administrator, Steve Peterson and Marcus Graham, Deputy Administer of Farm Field Operations. The Texas Executive Officer, Eddie Travino, also addressed the group. NAFEC called their meeting to order and completed necessary approval of the minutes from the 2022 annual meeting plus the minutes from the June 1, 2023 conference call. Minutes for this convention meeting should be approved at the September 12th Board meeting and will be available in full on the website after approval.



Present at meeting: Jim Zumbrink, President from Ohio
Craig Turner, Executive Vice President from Texas
Cole Sims, Vice President from Louisiana
Bob Braden, Secretary/Treasurer from Iowa
Dan Noteboom, NWA Director from Washington
Jim Densenberger, At Large Director from Nebraska
Art Chaney, SWA Director from Texas.
Coy Poitier, Texas Director
Larry Olson, South Dakota State Director
Guests: Debra Barret, STC Chair from Texas
Angie Martin, STC from Texas
David Senter, NAFEC Legislative Consultant
Dillard NAFEC Consultants: Kevin Dale, Director from Oklahoma
Tammy Eibey, Assistant from Iowa

Highlights of the meeting were discussions with David Senter, NAFEC Legislative Consultant, FSA Administer, Zach Ducheneaux, Marcus Graham, Deputy Administrator of Farm Field Operations, Brenda Carlson, FSA Communications Director, Marcinda Kester, NASCOE President, Joel Foster, NASCOE Vice President, Dillard Financial Solutions and a joint meeting with the NASCOE County Office Advocacy Committee.

David gave a report that the Ag Committees have pulled back on farm bill discussions until the House figures out Budget and Appropriation issues. Major cuts have been suggested. No Farm Bill, maybe a government shutdown October 1 due to the deadlock in DC.

The group gave the Administrator a history and purpose of NAFEC. The administrator stated the FSA job is the best job he has ever had. NAFEC wants nationwide uniform training for COC. Please look at something and keep NAFEC involved. There was a good discussion and NAFEC is working on a training plan to be sent to the Administrator.

Marcus Graham spoke about items happening in DC and budget standstill. Bob asked what the purpose of the Equity Commission was. Marcus stated that this is not necessarily new. There have been other focus groups that have looked at agency issues. Need to be inclusive. There have been situations where producers have been made to feel excluded. We can make improvements to make more people feel included. Some areas work good. Some areas have challenges. Some areas are broken. Before leaving, he reiterated that NAFEC should send him a letter and include the FSA Administrator on a training of COC proposal. The group did state to Marcus that they understand that this is not a new topic as the association worked with the administration back in 2012 to be more inclusive and adding the minority advisor position.

Teresa Dillard presented NAFEC with a check for \$5,500. (\$5,000 annual for being benefit provider and \$500 for scholarship support). Craig thanked them for their partnership, money, working relationship, friendship and taking care of members. Also thanked him for allowing Kevin and Tammy to be a big part of NAFEC and organizing things and keeping them on task.



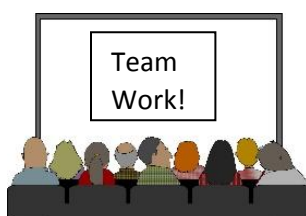
Jeannine Wendell, COAC Chair, had invited the NAFEC group to join their meeting to discuss topics of interest to both groups and how they can work together to be productive and show support of the FSA COC system and help when other issues arise and need a united front. (Exit Report later in newsletter) NAFEC thanked Jeannine for her leadership and cooperation with the group.

NAFEC continued with business regarding the corrections to the Constitution and Bylaws and information was submitted to the group. The updates were corrections to correctly show the NAFEC executive board as it is being operated and also to allow votes based on quorums. It was also adjusted to make items gender neutral. There was discussion and review and after the approval vote, the changes were adopted to go into effect as of August 4, 2023.

NAFEC has a letter ready to be sent out at the grassroots level of our agricultural organization partners. It will later be sent to the House and Senate Agriculture Committees. David and the group are monitoring also reports coming out of the Equity Commission and will be ready to act on any negative statements regarding COC's.

The election of officers for occurred and remained the same as 2023. There was approval of a Resolution in support of the new Urban County Committees and the Committee members (full resolution found later in newsletter). The group decided to have a call in September to fully discuss a possible organizational meeting in January 2024. They would also review any outstanding business and work on a COC training plan to submit to FSA. More information on the agenda and discussion points will be issued at a later point. Visit the NAFEC website at www.nafecfsa.com and the Facebook page, search National Association of Farmer Elected Committees, NAFEC.

The group discussed how positive the meeting was and that the discussions were very open and a lot of work was completed. President Zumbrink thanked the group for attending and the meeting was adjourned.



OIG AUDIT CONCERNS

In response to requests from COC's and NASCOE members across the south NAFEC has submitted a letter to Under Secretary William Bonnie and Administrator Zach Ducheneaux regarding OIG audits now occurring on the CFAP programs. This letter is shown as follows:



National Association of Farmer Elected Committees

Representing Farm Service Agency County Committee Members since 1965

August 18, 2023

Dear Under Secretary Bonnie and Administrator Ducheneaux:

My name is Jim Zumbrink, I am the President of the National Association of Farmer Elected Committees (NAFEC). Since 1965 NAFEC has been working to ensure the Farm Service Agency elected committee system continues to provide the most effective grass roots form of program delivery within all of government.

As you are aware, the FSA delivery system crosses many lines within the USDA. We work with the NRCS regarding conservation issues, RMA regarding crop insurance, NASS regarding statistical data and even the AMS on some disaster related fruit and vegetable programs. In addition to the FSA audit and review process, we also answer to the office of Inspector General regarding compliance spot-checks and audits. As an association, NAFEC is committed to successful farm delivery with the highest regard for program integrity. Our committees represent one of the first levels of program oversight and believe that all programs must have oversight and accountability to both the taxpayer and the producers we serve on a daily basis.

With that background provided, I now want to visit with you both about an issue that is affecting our offices and committees across the country. Recent reviews of the Coronavirus Assistance Program (CFAP and or CFAP2) made by the OIG are circumventing our local committees and causing difficulty for our offices and producers alike. For example: we understand OIG is reviewing files from these certified programs, making adverse determinations and then notifying COC's to collect back money as well as having OIG instructing COC's to issue demand letters and appeal rights without providing our local COC's the basis for the determination, or the details necessary to hold a request for reconsideration or appeal. This procedure is not in line with FSA program regulations and puts local COC's, CED's and office staff in difficult positions.

In the past, when OIG conducted audits and issued findings, these findings were submitted to the local FSA committee through the FSA State Committees who has oversight responsibility for local Committees. The local Committees could then issue letters fully explaining the results of the audits, requesting fund repayment

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(if necessary) and affording producers appeal rights through the local committee and all the way to the National Appeals division. However, the current process that OIG is using is not in line with this process.

As a result, we are requesting that you assist in rectifying this situation that we understand may be occurring nationwide, but with certainty in the south. NAFEC can provide you actual cases for further investigation if necessary. If we can be of assistance to you in this issue or other issues that may occur with program delivery, please let me know and thank you for taking the time to hear our concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jim Zumbrink".

Jim Zumbrink

NAFEC President



Summers Bounty at local Farmers Market

Farm Bill Letter to Agricultural Partner Organizations

NAFEC determined at their annual meeting that it was highly important to reach out to our Agricultural Partners prior to full Farm Bill discussions. The letter gives some history of past discrimination cases as a response to the recent Equity Commission reports. There also some history of the COC system and the importance of the grass roots involvement for the oversight of federal farm programs, the letter attached below was sent to members August 25, 2023. It may be printed from here and taken to your local and state organizations to support the COC and that FSA administer farm programs put in the new Farm Bill.



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Dear Agriculture Organizations:

Since the 1930's the Farm Service Agency and its forerunners (AAA, ASC, ASCS, etc.) have worked tirelessly to deliver farm programs at the local level to support American Farmers and Ranchers. With Abraham Lincoln's establishment of USDA and FDR's establishment of the Agriculture Adjustment Administration, bipartisan farm policy supported by our Agriculture organizations and legislated by Congress, have made the success of American Agriculture one of the greatest success stories in our country's history. The method of delivery with locally elected County Control associations, (now called County Committees) have also been vital in providing grass roots control and accountability at the local level.

Two years ago the Biden Administration's Equity Commission began reviewing issues within USDA that would prevent fair and equitable administration of USDA programs. According to the FSA Administrator (1) the FSA County Committees have been the "Elephant in the Room" for the Equity Commission hearings. Some members of the Equity Commission focused on trying to undermine the locally elected system of county committees and describing it as a system of corruption and favoritism. As the Association that has represented over 9,000 committee members and advisors since 1965, the National Association of Farmer Elected Committees (NAFEC) would like to go on record and address some of these issues and concerns as the next Farm Bill is under development.

Before addressing the Equity Commission concerns, NAFEC would like to assert our concern for fair and equitable treatment of all farmer and ranchers, both men and women of every race in the nation. We believe there is no room for favoritism, discrimination, or the "good ol boy" system in any USDA programs. We are committed to assist Congress and the Administration in ensuring fair and equitable treatment for all producers. However, we also believe that some of the concerns raised by the commission and USDA employees regarding the committee system is unfair misrepresentation of the facts. These are addressed below.

One of the primary issues over the past decades has been discrimination in the lending practices within USDA. A high percentage of past lawsuit claims made against USDA were found to be decisions made by the former FMHA committees that were not democratically elected. (Noted in *Pigford vs Glickman*, *Keepseagle vs Vilsack* and *Garcia vs Vilsack*)

Another issue brought up by the commission involves the inability of many small farmers and ranchers to participate in many of the FSA programs. As many of these programs are legislated by Congress with guidelines established in law, FSA has no ability to add producers to the programs if they do not meet the eligibility criteria for the program.

In addition to general FSA programs discussed above, the commission has been very critical of county committees establishing crop bases that are inequitable, omitting many small and minority producers in such establishment. As you are aware the establishment of crop bases is established by law under farm bill policy. While the County Committees have had review authority to ensure producers wishing to establish bases have in fact met the requirements of the law, the local FSA Committees have no ability to arbitrarily establish bases under local criteria nor to deny the establishment of crop bases when the criteria as established by law, are met. If there is an issue with crop bases we suggest that Agriculture

organizations work with the House and Senate Ag Committee to present a plan to address the concerns of the commission in establishing bases for the upcoming farm bill.

The commission has also been very critical of locally elected committees. Several presentations and discussions have been made to establish committees that are appointed rather than elected. NAFEC believes the success of the farm policy has been predicated upon a system mirroring our own democracy. Having local elections of committee members is as basic as Congress itself. As Henry Wallace wrote to FDR in 1934, "Farmers themselves largely administer the adjustment programs through county control associations. These bodies help to make as well as to administer adjustment policy. Thoroughly democratic in form and spirit, the associations are effective instruments in economic self-government..... In thus decentralizing administrative work, and at the same time creating new channels through which farmer opinion may find expression, the Agricultural Adjustment Act promotes true democracy." (2) Some of the individuals favoring appointed committees, have also suggested that local FSA directors not be under the supervision of local elected committees but rather be regular GS employees. We believe eliminating local committees as the supervisor of FSA directors would be huge step backward. Currently the county committee system is responsive to their clientele because they have local accountability to committees. With no local control over supervisors, we believe FSA could become like many of the other bureaucratic agencies that answer to no one. Having local elected committees who supervise local FSA directors who in turn hire local staffs has been of the primary reasons the Farm Service Agency has been considered the "Can Do Agency" within government. No other agency has the track record of delivering Federal programs like FSA. Much of this success is attributable to the unique system of legislated Farm policy by a Federal Agency but with local grass roots control. We believe this system/partnership should be a model for all of government, rather than a model that needs to be dismantled.

Finally, NAFEC would like to point out that the FSA Administration has indicated during the hearings of the commission that additional training of committees is needed. NAFEC has repeatedly ask the Administration to provide more face to face training of committees. We have also offered to assist in this training if funding were provided. However, many of these request have either denied or ignored. Over the past twenty years County Committee training has gone from statewide meetings (sometimes multiple days of meetings) where committees were educated, trained and provided case studies to review, to currently having a short conference call where a District Director might provide a very limited amount of training. NAFEC believes good, face to face education and training is the best way to ensure fair and equitable programs in every county across the nation and stands ready and willing to assist in this endeavor or to discuss what this might look like. As the next Farm Bill is being considered NAFEC would encourage all of the agriculture organizations and Congress to find ways to make ensure FSA committees have a large role in delivering farm programs locally. We stand committed to assist and would be more than willing to provide testimony or suggestions on any of these issues we have examined in this letter. Thank you for your support of American Agriculture.

Sincerely,



(1) – Equity Commission hearings 6/27/2023

(2) – 1934 Yearbook of Agriculture



RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE URBAN COC'S

Recently the Administration announced the implementation of new locally elected Urban County Committees in 17 Metroplexes around the nation. At the 2023 convention NAFEC adopted a resolution of support for these new locally elected Urban County Committee's. Here is the resolution:

“We resolve to support all the newly elected Urban County Committees and members as they work to encourage and promote urban, indoor and other emerging agricultural production practices. These urban committees also address food access, community engagement, support of local activities to support community compost and food waste reduction.

These urban committees will also make determinations, listen to appeals and make decisions, conduct outreach to urban and suburban farms and farmers on behalf of both FSA and NRCS.

NAFEC supports these Urban Committees and USDA's efforts to better support urban Agriculture in our country.”

URBAN COC MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Coy Poitier a new urban COC member from Dallas Texas was recently appointed as one of two Texas NAFEC state directors. USDA ran a nice article on Coy and we want to highlight Coy in the current newsletter and more can be found about Coy and Urban County Committees at www.famers.gov.

In this issue of the NAFEC Newsletter, meet Coy Poitier of Lancaster, Texas, and Chairman of the Dallas FSA Urban County Committee (UCOC).



Coy Poitier, certified master gardener, manages a one-acre urban farm and serves as chairman of the Dallas Urban County Committee. (Photo by Joshua Coleman, FSA.)

Coy started farming after graduating from Texas A&M University's Texas [Master Gardener program](#) conducted by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in 2020. He is now the executive director of the [FAWC Conservatory of Arts and Sciences](#), a non-profit public charity located in Lancaster, Texas.

This one-acre urban farm is an educational center that teaches the community how to start, grow, and maintain an urban farm. The farm is managed by Coy and his wife, Katrina, both Texas-certified master gardeners. They currently have over 40 fruit trees, a vegetable garden, a vineyard, and a greenhouse with a 100-gallon aquaponics tank and a seed-planting station.



“I believe it is my calling to help people learn how to grow their own food. While running an after-school program in 2019, we discovered that most of our students were attending the program just to eat a snack,” Coy said. “My wife and I were shocked to find out that the snack could be their last meal of the day. We changed our focus to not only feeding the children, but also teaching them and the community how to grow their own food.”

FAWC Conservatory of Arts and Sciences is an educational center to teach the community how to start, grow and maintain their own urban farms. (Photo by Joshua Coleman, FSA.)

In addition to their urban farm, Coy and Katrina recently launched an urban agriculture startup company, Poitier and Associates, specializing in creating environmentally-sound landscapes and food-secure communities in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. Their future location will include an all-in-one indoor farm, consulting firm, and market where they will sell produce and other healthy products. They’ve also launched a podcast, Gardening with Kat and Coy, to promote food security, urban farming, and living healthier lives.

“Urban farming and teaching people how to grow has been my passion and mission,” he said.

The Dallas UCOC is one of 17 around the United States dedicated to urban agriculture. These committees work to encourage and promote urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural production practices. Additionally, the UCOC’s may address areas such as food access, community engagement, support of local activities to promote and encourage community compost, and food waste reduction.

Coy works with Stefen Tucker, urban county executive director for Dallas, to ensure other urban farmers are aware of USDA programs and benefits. Photo by Joshua Coleman, FSA.

Coy was elected to the Dallas UCOC in 2022 and served as chairman in 2022 and again in 2023. In this role, he works to ensure that all urban farmers in his elective area are aware of all the benefits and opportunities that USDA offers through FSA and the [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#). This includes encouraging other farmers to visit their local USDA Service Center to register for a farm number.

“I want the voices of the traditionally unheard farmers to be heard. To do that, I needed to be part of the conversation, and being on the committee gives me a chance to do so,” Coy said.

In addition to the UCOC, Coy has served on various boards and commissions in Dallas County for over 12 years. He currently serves an appointed position on the Dallas County Historical Commission. “As a citizen and active member of the urban farming community, I believe it is my responsibility to serve,” he said. “I love helping all farmers, and being on the Urban COC gives me a chance to promote and advocate for urban farmers and urban agriculture in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex.”



SCHOLARSHIP WINNER ANNOUNCED

Each year our national benefits provider, Dillard Financial Solutions and NAFEC join forces to present a \$1,000 National Scholarship for children or grandchildren of NAFEC members. This year's winner is Keviana Harris from Dallas, Texas. She is a student at Langston University and is studying Agricultural Business. Her Father, Coy Poitier, is Chairman of the Dallas County Urban County Committee.



My experiences in the garden have made me the person I am today. My name is Keviana Harris and this is about me. Growing up I was raised in the church, if we weren't doing something, we were at church. We went to church after school and after practices. I was the captain of the Samuel High School track team and I won many medals. I graduated in 2021 from Lancaster High Schools and was in the National Honor Society. Being the youngest female in the church, I was put on the praise dance team until I couldn't do it anymore. Over Time I became the praise dance instructor since we had younger girls coming to the church. It was something I was proud of because I was able to teach my feeling and express them through the dance and dancers I was very shy and embarrassed if I would mess up or forgot the dance but once I felt the music, I didn't have to think, I could just dance. My parents have always been supportive of me but wanted me to open my abilities to more, they started FWAC Garden and never looked back.

In the garden, I was taught to notice the littlest things and let the garden tell you what it needed. I became my dad's second hand man and I really liked it. I loved being in the garden helping and learning about the new fruits and vegetable, some I never had heard of. I was also able to do community service during this time. During my middle and high school days I was not confident in myself, I didn't like how I looked or talked. I was bullied and felt like I was never needed. But being in the garden and church, it felt like I was needed and felt if I left things would fall apart so I stayed, kept going and never gave up! My Goal is to graduate from college and help run gardens and do that I can do it! My confidence goes up as I learn new things, I don't care what other say about me now. Early mornings and late nights I spend helping my parents with the garden. We pick vegetables to be eaten, cut the weeds out so the good plants can grow, continue to water and make sure there is enough sunlight. Making the garden look presentable by painting things and making signs is fun. I am proud to say I am part of an amazing family that helps to provide life changes in the community. Thank you for the scholarship and it will help me in the future.





COC POLITICAL ACTIVITY

Each year we have questions about what is permissible and what is prohibited for COC members serving on local committees. We have provided you a list of these items in exhibit 2. We have attached the letter that was sent out in March 2020 due to many questions on the rights of COC members in a political campaign year. That letter is attached below in Exhibit 2.

David Senter, KSC Strategies, Legislative Report

NAFEC does not get involved in agriculture policy, but instead supports that any farm and ranch programs that are included in the new Farm Bill can be delivered by FSA utilizing our County Elected Committees and our County FSA offices. NAFEC also opposes any effort to eliminate County Elected Committees. Both the House Agriculture Committee and the Senate Agriculture Committee have held numerous hearings and gathered input from a diverse group of organizations and individuals to decide what to include in the new Farm Bill. Both Committees are working on language and Titles so that the House and Senate Committees can compromise and reach agreement for the passage of the final bill which expires at the end of September.

The Farm Bill has always been a bipartisan bill and has enjoyed support from urban and rural members. Problem this year is in the House of Representatives where there is a divide within the Republican members over spending levels for the Farm Bill as well as for government wide funding. Until the appropriation and budget are decided on, the Agriculture committees don't know how much money they have to spend on each program. I'm hearing from leadership in both the House and Senate Agriculture Committees that the Farm Bill will not be finished by the end of September, letting the current Farm Bill expire. It appears to me that we may be looking at December for a huge government funding bill which would include either the Farm Bill or an extension of the current bill for 1 or 2 years. January 1st, permanent law kicks in and most storable commodities Loan Rates would go to Parity Prices. The permanent law trigger I think will be what forces the Farm Bill to be passed.

All I can say is, fasten your seatbelts for this fall and the fireworks that you will see and hear which may include a government wide shutdown which would close all our FSA offices during a very busy time.

David Senter
NAFEC Legislative Consultant
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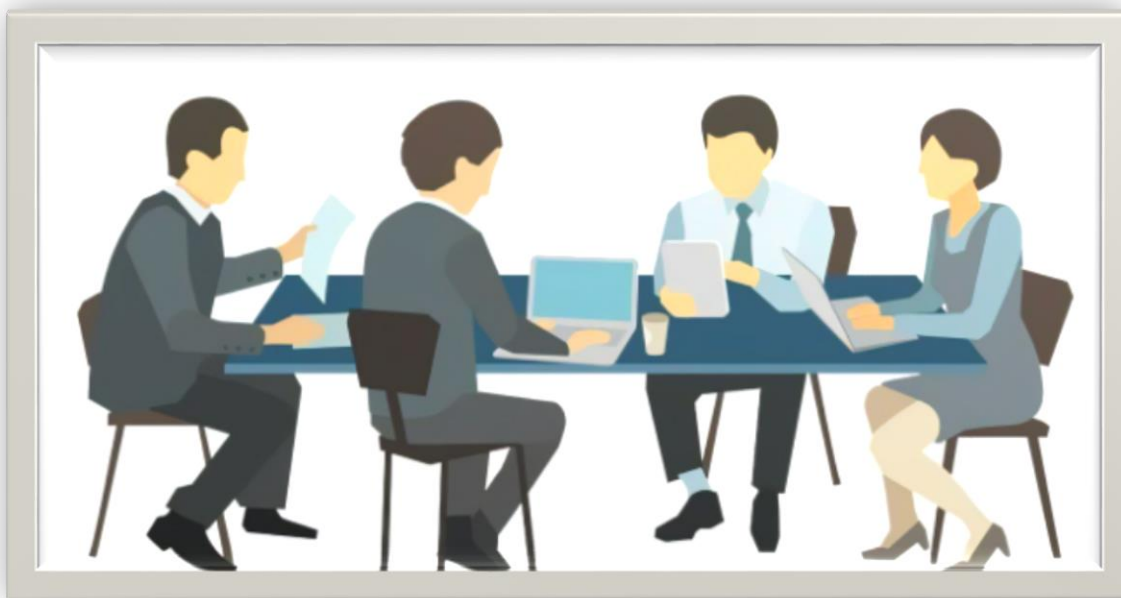


NAFEC Marketing:

Hello my name is Kevin Dale and I'm currently serving as your NAFEC National Marketing Director courtesy of NAFEC's partnership with Dillard Financial Solutions. Tammy Eibey is your NAFEC Assistant Marketing Director. Tammy and I served together on the NASCOE Executive Committee and make a great team. Together we have been working hard to increase the NAFEC footprint nationwide. We are visiting offices, meeting with COC members and staffs and hosting audio visual zooms with COC members during their regular meeting. If any of you have need of a zoom or know of another County that might be interested please give them our contact info. Tammy is in Iowa and I am in Oklahoma. One or both of us are available for calls. Here is our contact info.

Kevin Dale – (580) 916-1470, kevinldale@sbcglobal.net

Tammy Eibey – (563) 920-7542, teibey@dillardfinancial.com





National Association of FSA County Office Employees County Office Advocacy Committee

2023 National Convention Exit Report

College Station, TX

August 1-5, 2023

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Howdy once again and WOW what an Aggie-AWESOME convention we have just experienced in College Station, Texas! A BIG Texas size thank you to TASCOE for hosting this year in a truly wonderful location. Another word of thanks goes out to Madam President Marcinda Kester, who put her faith in me to finish out her year in NASCOE. It has been a real learning experience for me, and one I will treasure in my career. It has been a whirlwind but very rewarding to meet new faces, see old friends while working towards the common goal for our COC's, employees and NASCOE.

Reflecting back on these short 8 months that I have served as your County Office Advocacy Committee (COAC) Chair, I have seen the challenges that COAC, NASCOE, FSA employees, COC members and NAFEC have faced right along with the farmers and ranchers that we serve in our counties. It is a true statement to say that we are survivors and we have certainly persevered as folks in agriculture just do! It does not go without saying another note of gratitude goes out to the following leaders that have helped me in this role:

- NEA Chair - Barbie Parsons
- NWA Chair - Jill Lorang
- MWA Chair - Katrina Miller
- SEA Chair - Charla Brannon
- SWA Chair - Samuel Montoya
- Kevin Dale, National Marketing Director for NAFEC Assistant
- Donny Green, SEA Exec and COAC Founder
- Morgan Limmer, FSA District Director #13; and former COAC Chair
- Macy Logan, TASCOE Director #13 (assisted with COAC Logo)

The County Office Advocacy Committee held two enlightening and productive breakout session, with 9 strong in attendance at the first session and 20 stronger in attendance at the second session. We were

honored to have the NAFEC officers, directors and members (12 NAFEC in total) in our 2nd session with information shared from several of them as well as Kevin Dale enlightening those in attendance on NAFEC's involvement and importance working alongside NASCOE and COAC.

Items discussed from sessions were: Educating our employees/COC's with suggestions of a COAC Newsletter; COAC/NAFEC touch card with importance of COC; SEDs to emphasize information going out to every COC on NAFEC and COAC; NAFEC offered to set up TEAMS meetings to discuss benefits and educate COC's during their monthly/quarterly meetings as NAFEC is the COC's legal representation and it can be discussed during their COC meeting times. Also Cole Sims, NAFEC, suggested a NAFEC+COAC training video to educate that was more personal with interviews from COC, NAFEC and COAC to share to all states.

A list of NAFEC POC was suggested to be sent out for all states to know their contacts.

COC Orientation Trainings need to go back to face-to-face meetings that are uniform from state to state and where NAFEC can be invited to attend and share the benefits in order to assure that COCs are ALL getting educated on what NAFEC has to offer and how to be involved with NAFEC and COAC. Equity Commission was also briefly discussed with its importance and how we can stay informed on what is happening with regards to the Commission. Another topic was strengthening the NAFEC membership by obtaining NAFEC Directors in each and every state plus recruiting more associate members to NAFEC for just \$1 per PP or a one-time \$200 lifetime membership. COAC will continue its mission with NAFEC in promoting membership and the COC system. If you or your COC members are not NAFEC members, I, along with all NAFEC represented at the convention, urge you to complete an associate member application and talk to your COC members about the importance of NAFEC and their benefits they offer once a member.

Also discussed was the unveiling of the new COAC branding mark/logo emblem for educational purposes in hopes that it will bring a better awareness of what COAC represents for all – COMMUNICATION, COOPERATION, COLLABORATION and COMMUNITY.



COAC =COC = COAC = NAFEC = NASCOE = YOU!

Make this synonymous when you hear or see one you think of all of us joining forces together as a TEAM!

Additional COAC goals, suggestions, and ideas were also discussed:

- Increase communication with NAFEC officers, consultants, STOs and COF staffs.
- Education to employees is the key to educate COC members, farmers, and ranchers!

- Continue to work closely with the Legislative Committee and our NASCOE Legislative consultant with NAFEC also monitoring the Equity Commission developments.
- Ensure COC's are trained properly and fully understand the significance of their responsibilities as COC members to their COF employees, STO and the farmers and ranchers they serve. Allow PT's to be in the COC meetings annually during the COC trainings for their input and education. It was encouraged to have NAFEC packets with a new Fact sheet, NAFEC newsletter and any additional information sent out to all CEDs or to all COF's for COC's to review earlier than January as some COCs act on their Organizational Meetings after the COC December elections if the COC members remain the same for that county. Normally this information is received in January each year and sometimes it is after the COCs first meetings of the year.
- Encourage Area Chairs to invite a state chair from their area to participate in COAC and to fill those states that do not currently have a COAC Chairs serving in their association. This would give all states a COAC chairs and have direct contact with their state COAC Chair, their COC members and NAFEC state directors as well.
- COAC and/or NAFEC emblem to be placed on the USDA-FSA COC Elections pamphlets that are in each and every County Office (COFs) nationwide for education and awareness.
- Stay diligent in working with NAFEC on their assistance in calling attention to the National Office on updating verbiage and charts in handbooks so that the COC system are represented accurately and effectively. Thank you to NAFEC, Kevin, Tammy and David for your work started with Donny Green and fortunately COAC and NAFEC were able to carry that forward in hopes to be corrected in future HB amendments.

As we move forward into the future, COAC should be synonymous with the COC acronym. as well as NAFEC in all COFs. The members in attendance felt the passion and enthusiasm as well as enjoyed the southern hospitality that Texas certainly provided for the convention. All involved felt that being together again was so needed to build and rebuild relationships; and encourage new ideas as we share success stories from NAFEC, COAC and NASCOE.

It has truly been an honor and a blessing to serve as your NASCOE COAC Chair. Thank you for this opportunity and I am looking forward to our future as we to continue the growth and the eagerness to build a stronger COAC, NAFEC and NASCOE.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeannine P. Wendel
NASCOE COAC Chair

P.S.

I wanted to leave you with these inspirations since I did not get to share them at convention:

COMMITTED VS. INTERESTED

When you're committed you find a way
When you're interested you find an excuse.
When you're committed you do what it takes.
When you're interested you do what's convenient.
When you're committed you do it consistently.
When you're interested you do it occasionally.
When you're committed you take accountability.
When you're interested you point fingers and shift blame.

WHICH ARE YOU? COMMITTED OR INTERESTED?

Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible. ~ St. Francis of Assisi

In life, be the type of person that leaves a mark... Not a scar! ~ Unknown 0



NAFEC will be holding their annual meeting in conjunction with the NASCOE convention to be held in the Quad Cities. The Illinois state association will be hosting the event. NAFEC is working on getting a time for COC training approved with the IASCOE, NASCOE and the FSA Administration so that COC members can attend the convention and spend some time receiving COC required training as well as meeting with FSA leadership from Washington DC and learn more about the NAFEC Association. Please try to make plans to attend and put in your calendar. There will be more details and information regarding the convention coming out over the next several months. We will forward out to membership and COC's once we have training requests approved and registration information becomes available for release. We encourage attendance by all for the annual meeting regardless of approved COC training for attendees.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS!



NAFEC MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

New Member Information

Name _____ Spouse Name _____
Address _____ Home Phone _____
City _____ Mobile Phone _____
State _____ Zip _____ Email _____
Employer FSA County Office

Member Signature _____ Date / /

Select Your Membership Type

Lifetime Membership: \$200.00

County Committee Member

CIRCLE ONE PAYMENT OPTION ONLY

Pay in Full Now

\$40

ANNUALLY

OR

Deduct from Payroll

\$4

PER MEETING

Associate Member

CIRCLE ONE PAYMENT OPTION ONLY

Pay in Full Now

\$20

ANNUALLY

OR

Deduct from Payroll

\$1

PER PAY PERIOD

For In Full Payments

Mail your check and completed NAFEC Membership Application to:

NAFEC
c/o Joan Senter
742 Farmington Rd.
Accokeek, MD 20607

For Payroll Deduction Payments

Complete an FSA-444 form and forward the original to your state office.

Also, email a copy of your FSA-444 & your completed NAFEC Membership Application to Joan Senter.
JPSNAFEC2020@gmail.com

In order to be eligible for NAFEC Member Benefits enrollment, this completed application must be sent to NAFEC.

For questions concerning this application, email Joan Senter.

JPSNAFEC2020@gmail.com



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Exhibit 1

County Committee Oversight Checklist

Regular Minutes dated _____

Exhibit _____

I. Payments

- A. What is the status of outstanding payments?

- B. Is the county office having to pay interest due to payment delays?

II. Program Deadlines

- A. Are there any program deadlines occurring soon? If so will a register be required, or will the COF staff be able to enroll everyone by the deadline?

- B. If a register is required in #2 above how many producers are expected to be on the register?

III. Outreach

- A. What type of outreach activities has the CED performed this month?

- B. Are there any outreach meetings planned for county producers?

IV. Personnel

- A. Has the CED performed the most recent quarterly review of employee's performance?

- B. Are there any staff issues that need to be discussed, if so see the executive minutes for discussion?

C. Is the CED planning any extended time off between now and the next COC meeting?

D. Is there adequate staffing at this time to perform the workload or is there a need for additional temporary staffing that needs to be discussed with DD?

E. Is the CED holding regular staff meetings?

V. Customer Service

A. Have the COC been made aware of any positive issues regarding customer service?

B. Has the COC or the CED been made aware of any negative customer service issues the past month? (Discuss in executive min)

VI. Training

A. Has the CED completed all of his/her required training?

B. Has the COC completed all of their required training?

VII. Other Issues or Concerns – List below.

VIII. Adjourn: _____ Next Meeting Date/Time: _____

Chairperson Signature



Exhibit 2 – Political Activity Letter Reminder for 2024



National Association of Farmer-Elected Committees

Permitted Political Activity for FSA County Committee Members

March 6, 2020

2020 is an election year and NAFEC has been getting questions from County Committee (COC) members concerning rules that govern them pertaining to their involvement in campaigns. County Committees have received some questionable guidance from some State Offices in reference to “Do’s” and “Do not’s” when it comes to permitted and legal activities for COC members. In response, NAFEC has prepared a document listing the FSA handbook references, as well as United States Code references listing the rules. As we approach the upcoming election season and all other times when we consider supporting or opposing legislation, it is important for county committee members and county office employees to understand their rights as private citizens.

There is an inconsistency in how FSA Handbooks 16-AO and 22-PM limit COC’s activities.

16-AO prohibits federal lobbying to “Duty Hours” while 22-PM prohibits COC lobby activities for the entire day when there has been a county committee meeting on that day. To err on the side of precaution, **NAFEC recommends members not engage in political activity on any day the county committee meets.**

FSA Handbook 16-AO (Rev.3), paragraph 232 deals with Congressional Contacts. “An employee or county committee member acting as a private citizen is free to express their viewpoints to members of congress provided these activities do not take place during their duty hours.”

FSA Handbook 22-PM (Rev. 1) Paragraph 401A: “County Committee members may lobby at the county and state legislatures, but not on any day the COC member works for ASCS (FSA).”

In some instances, COC members have been told they cannot tell staff or members of Congress they are members of a county committee. This is not correct, COC members can certainly identify themselves as county committee members to members of congress or their staff. **However, they should follow up by stating they are acting as a private citizen;** not acting in an official capacity as a county committee member.

Finally, 18 U.S.C.A. 1913, is the statute that prohibits lobbying with appropriated funds, which means if you are in a COC meeting at the FSA offices there should no lobbying activities. But, any other time you are a private citizen and can participate as you wish.

NAFEC continues to work hard to advise county committees of their important roles and authorities. We wholeheartedly support the FSA county office system and continue to promote the critical need of additional staffing in our county offices.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact NAFEC.

Respectfully,
Craig Turner NAFEC President
806-269-0610
nafecpresident@gmail.com