

NAPS meeting 4-20-09

Meeting began at 7:15 pm at the Boise Plant.

Dinner was provided from Pizza Hutt. \$55.00

Present: Brian Gardner, Henry Medel, Michelle Audette, Len Kolbet, Ken Christianson, Chris Howard, Bill Terry, Brandon Cruz, Marc Boyer, John Valuet, and Dan Day.

Ken talked about LTS. He mentioned that there was a very positive note on The Hill. We were able to meet with all staff members for Sen. Crapo, Sen. Risch, Rep. Simpson, and Rep. Minnick. He talked about some updates on certain Bills we are hoping to have passed. The following information was provided from Ken.

"A few weeks ago, myself as your legislative representative along with the aid of Michelle Audette visited our nation's capitol. This effort along with other NAPS representatives from all 50 states we brought forth the following (6) issues to our elected national officials.

House Bill H.R. 22 which was designed to provide critical financial relief to the Postal Service by permitting the Service to pay its share of current retirees' health insurance premiums out of the \$32 billion it already has deposited in the Health Benefit Fund. The agency currently has no authority to use these funds and if given so would save the agency approx. \$2.8 billion per year for the next 8 years while yet still contributing to the fund on a yearly basis. This bill has wide support and is expected to be passed into law during this session of Congress.

House Bill H.R. 958 which is designed to apply the same sick leave policy to employees covered under FERS retirement system as those employees covered the old Civil Service Retirement System. Under CSRS an employee can use their accrued sick leave balance to add to their length in service which is used in the computation of an employee's pension. FERS employees currently don't have this option. This bill would remedy this problem. According to the Office of Personal Mgt. FERS employees are using up their sick leave accrued hours as they near retirement since in this use it or lose it environment and costing the Federal Govt. \$68 million a year in lost productivity. This piece of legislation has been brought forth over the course of the last few years without success but is gaining support.

House Bill H.R. 1604 is a piece of legislation which would guarantee the right of any eligible voter to vote by mail in federal elections. This legislation, although self serving for the Postal Service, is also popular with the general population of Americans. It offers Americans a convenient, secure and inexpensive way of voting in national federal elections. This bill has some support from the hill but there are skeptics.

House Bill H.R. 1203 and Senate Bill 491 supports how federal retirees pay for their health care insurance premiums. This is also known as "premium conversion". Current active federal employees pay for their health care insurance premiums with pre-tax payroll earnings. However, once retired, those earnings are taxed then health care insurance premiums are deducted from the pension. These bills correct this problem by giving the retirees the same benefit of paying their premiums before the pensions are taxed. Although costly to the federal gov't. it has support from several members of congress.

House Bill H.R. 1157 is a piece of legislation that supports preferences to veterans that are involuntary reassigned during any downsizing action of any federal agency. This action also provides veterans the right of appeal to involuntary geographic reassignments to the Merit System Protection Board. Many members of Congress support this Bill.

Lastly NAPS is supporting the Senate version of Bill S. 484 and house Bill 235 which supports the passage of "Social Security Fairness Act of 2009. These two Bills eliminate the "Govt. Pension Offset" which unfairly reduces and or eliminates the Social Security spousal or survivor benefits for an otherwise eligible retired postal employee. These Bills also eliminate the "Windfall Elimination Provision" which unfairly reduces earned Social Security benefits by up to 60 % for a retiree that retired under the CSRS retirement system."

John followed up with the importance of having the experience of going to "The Hill" and the importance of building relationships with the Staffers and Representatives. We are recognized when we return, which makes a huge difference. If you ever have questions about what NAPS is supporting or where bills presently stand and updates, go to www.naps.org which is the National webpage or visit www.napsnw.org for area updates.

John also explained SPAC and how important our contributions are to that fund. He encouraged all of us to go online and sign up for deductions. Without this fund, we may not be as dominantly recognized by the House and Congress. It is this fund that generates financial monies to give to our Representatives for support to fight for things important to NAPS.

Michelle reported our current bank balance of \$9336.15.

We currently have 79 members. We have voted to have a debit card, However US Bank has not followed through with this. As a result Henry is checking with Key Bank to transfer our funds.

John discussed the situation with impacted employees and described what will be taking place during Phase 1 and Phase 2.

Phase I:

Postings: April 28, 2009 - May 13, 2009

Selections: May 22 - June 3, 2009

Phase II:

Postings: June 16, 2009 - July 1, 2009

Selections: July 14, 2009 - July 23, 2009

VER: April 10, 2009 to June 19, 2009

Some relocation information...

- ❑ **Vacancy announcements posted on *eCareer* usually state if relocation is not authorized for applicants applying for promotion.**
- ❑ **See handbook F-15 for detailed information:
(Part 3 Travel & Relocation, Nonbargaining Only)**
- ❑ **If you request non-competitive consideration (outside of *eCareer*) always discuss relocation with the Selecting Official.**
- ❑ **The March 6, 2009 memo from VP Controller, HQ states relo benefits will be authorized for qualifying impacted employees taking lateral or downgrade reassignments; benefits are based on the level of the position vacated (not the position accepted.)**

Be sure to go to our Spokane District website and click on “Organizational Changes” to find helpful information regarding updates.

Good news is there are only 8 or 9 employees that are actually impacted in the Boise area. There are about 12 positions in the local area (within 50 miles commute) that are presently vacant. Phase 1 is for Salt Lake City District, Seattle District and plant facility employees that are impacted locally. Phase 2 is for all (nationally) employees that are impacted. IMPACTED Employees ONLY.

May 9th is when the Spokane District will finalize the District closure. (There will no longer be a Spokane Finance number).

John brought up the 5-State Convention that will be held in Bend, OR May 15th and 16th. We would like more members to come. We will try and budget for about 5 people to attend, hopefully all expenses paid. Please contact John Valuet ASAP if you would like to go.

John mentioned that it is a potential that we may have to restructure the boundaries of the Branch in result of the deletion of Spokane District. It was motioned by Len that we contact those individual members impacted and ask them which Branch (915 or 60), they would like to be a part of). It was seconded by Henry. John will contact these individual members. (Aprox. 4 or 5 members). We also discussed that we need to get Eastern Idaho involved. John will work on getting together with members in the Eastern part of the State later this summer.

John mentioned that we did not have the funds this year to have the Hockey or Football game. It was sadly missed by all members. The Hockey Game costs us about \$3500 to \$4000 to host. Expenses to operate NAPS have grown over the years simply because of travel and registrations expenses have increased. It costs us more money to send our representatives to mandatory training and conventions such as LTS, National Conventions, Western Area Training, and 5 State Conventions. Our dues have not changed in Branch 915 for many years. Our dues are only \$8.50 every Pay Period.

Branch 60 dues are \$11.00 PP. The national average of Branch dues is \$11.50. By raising our dues, we would be able to host a yearly or two events for all our members to enjoy as well as enable us to send more representatives to conventions and training. It was motioned by Ken that we ask the membership to vote whether or not our dues should be raised to \$10.00 PP. It was seconded by Henry. Michelle will send out an email to the membership asking for their input and announcing that it will be taken to vote at a meeting scheduled for May 19th at the Boise Plant at 7 pm. If they will be unable to attend they can cast their vote by email to michelleaudette@yahoo.com or call 208-573-1772.

Next meeting will be May 19th at 7 pm at the Boise Plant.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.