

RASCOE NEWS

The National Association of Retired ASCS/FSA Office Employees

Issue No. 91 Winter 2025 - 2026



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

DAVID GOODSON *PRESIDENT*

Greetings.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Let us all be thankful for what we do have.

I am grateful for the RASCOE members who had enough faith in me to elect me as your President. I am also thankful for the RASCOE Board members for their dedication and support to each of their areas.

I look forward to the new year and advocate for benefits and improvements for our members benefit.



SHELLY ODENKIRK *VICE PRESIDENT/ LEGISLATIVE CHAIR*

In addition to serving as your Vice President, I am honored to also serve as your Legislative Chair. I would like to provide you with an update on several key issues currently being addressed at the legislative level.

We are actively exploring whether there is interest within Congress to take the lead on addressing the disparity in annual cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) between CSRS and FERS retirees. For 2026, the CSRS COLA is set at 2.8%, while FERS retirees will receive only 2.0%. Because this difference is established by law, any change would require Congressional action. Such a change would involve significant cost to the government, making it a challenging and lengthy effort—however, so was the WEP/GPO fight, and that battle was ultimately won.

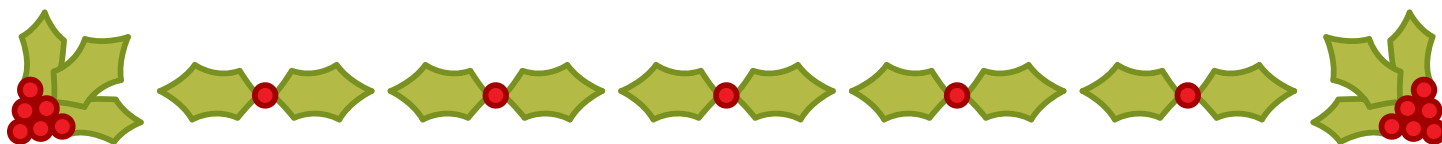
Health benefits remain another priority concern. Premiums continue to increase at a rate outpacing our cost-of-living adjustments, placing additional strain on retirement income. We are also pursuing efforts to have retiree health insurance premiums deducted from gross income before taxes—an option already available to active employees.

Your leadership team remains committed to keeping you informed and advocating to ensure that retiree benefits remain fair, protected, and reflective of the commitments made to all of us upon retirement.

As we enter the Christmas season, I wish you moments of peace, joy, and connection with family, friends, and loved ones. May God bless you in the year ahead.

Shelly Odenkirk

VP/Legislative Chair



PAST PRESIDENTS REMARKS

BECKY ZIRPEL

First, I want to extend my warmest wishes during the Advent season and a very Merry Christmas to each and every one of you.

I am deeply grateful to the members of RASCOE, as well as the NASCOE Board and its members, for the support you provided during my time as Vice President and, most especially, as President. I truly enjoyed both the social connections and the meaningful work we accomplished together on behalf of our members.

We experienced a significant success with the passage of the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO) reforms. It was the collective support of our members, along with the efforts of other organizations, that ultimately moved this legislation through Congress and to the President's desk. This achievement reflects exactly what our mission is—advocating for legislation that benefits our members.

I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to David Goodson and his team for stepping forward to continue the leadership and service of RASCOE—and all retirees. David serves with heart, integrity, and a genuine commitment to your best interests, and I am confident he will lead RASCOE well.

As for me, I now find I have a little more time to focus on personal interests, but I remain committed to supporting my fellow retirees whenever needed.

This Christmas season and always, may you keep God at the center of your life and continue strengthening your family bonds.

*Merry Christmas, and many blessings
to you in the New Year!*

Becky Zirpel



NATIONAL CONVENTION – 2025 - WHITEFISH MT

BRENT ORR

WEBMASTER/ NEA REPRESENTATIVE

News from the Northeast and

Other Things!

Happy holidays! Buone vacanze! Glade heytider! Felices fiestas! I hope this writing finds you in a wonderful holiday mood and looking for all the best during this time of friends and family.

Let me introduce myself. I'm Brent Orr. I recently (March 2024) retired from USDA with something around 37 years (when you toss in sick leave). Most of the time was with ASCS/CFSA/FSA but the last three, I worked with RMA. I worked in several county offices in Mississippi before transitioning to the national office in 2006. My wife, Kristie, and I moved back to her family home on Cape Cod (come see us)! At the RASCOE convention in Montana, our new president, David Goodson, asked me to be the NEA Rep as well as the webmaster. Soooooo here I am!

I really appreciate being involved with the NEA of NASCOE. They have invited me to join in their monthly calls. Thanks to Sandra and Barbie for having me join.

One item I really need to get rolling is attacking membership. We are few in numbers (but high in quality) here in the northeast. I have mailed a personal letter to all previous members of RASCOE and intend to do the same for all newly retired.

My other role is as webmaster. The biggest part of those duties is monitoring the RASCOE Facebook group. I'm not exactly sure why some accounts try to spam info into a group of former USDA employees, but it happens a LOT! Also, to join the group, you must answer three membership questions. They are simple but must be answered. If any one is having problems, please feel free to contact me at brentlyorr@gmail.com or message me on Facebook.

Seasons greeting from the northeast! None of that solid rain has fallen yet and this Mississippi boy is eternally grateful it has not.

Take care, Brent



2025 NATIONAL CONVENTION. LEFT TO RIGHT – SHELLY ODENKIRK, VP/LEGISLATIVE CHAIR, BECKY ZIRPEL, PAST PRES, DAVID GOODSON, PRESIDENT, MICKI LINEHAN, SECRETARY/PUBLICITY CHAIR, CINDY HALL, TREASURER/MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

CINDY HALL MEMBERSHIP - TREASURER'S REPORT

My daughter and I were privileged to recently take a cruise down the Rhine River. There was very little to watch on the television, except a few tv series (not that we spent a lot of time watching tv, but it was dark sometimes). One of the shows available was Downtown Abbey.

Since neither one of us had caught Downtown Abbey fever before, we decided to start watching it together. In one episode, one of the characters thought they might have a cancer diagnosis (I won't spoil the results in case there's someone else who hasn't watched the episode). But it got me to thinking that in the 1920's and many years since, cancer was mostly a death sentence. Additionally, the cost of any treatment could be devastating. It made me realize how fortunate we are as retirees to be able to continue our health insurance into retirement. But we can't take any benefit that we have for granted. That's why we pay our dues, so we can continue to fight for the benefits we currently enjoy.

Speaking of dues, we've come up with a way to make paying them easier! We now have a way you can pay your dues by Venmo if you normally pay me directly (and not through a state treasurer). You can contact me directly at nwanascoe@gmail.com or 402-210-1814 and I can give you the information you'll need to make the payment.

Bank balance as of 11/29/2025 is \$40,852.36 plus a CD worth \$5,641.91.

Here's hoping you all have Very Happy Holidays and a prosperous New Year!

MICKI LINEHAN - SECRETARY/PUBLICITY CHAIR

Here we are again in our Blessed Holiday Season. I hope you all had a great and thankful Thanksgiving. I sure did. We went to our sons in Paradise Valley, AZ. It's about 200 miles from us here in Yuma, AZ. We had a glorious time with the kids and grandkids that live in that area. We spend 6 months in Clarkston, WA and 6 months in Yuma AZ. Just trying to catch good weather during the winter months in Yuma. And the summer months in Southeastern Washington are awesome.

I'm also thankful that I was re-elected as your Secretary and appointed by our new President David Goodson to be your Publicity Chair during our 2025 Annual Meeting. I have had



the pleasure of doing this for 11 years. I was first elected in 2014 at the first convention that I went to as a RASCOE retiree. I've been honored to be elected each year since. I love staying in touch with all of you across the country.

Our Annual Meeting in June in Whitefish, MT was such a fun time. I have been to Whitefish many times, however, there were so many NASCOE and RASCOE people there that had never been to that area. Lots of beautiful places to visit and it's very near Glacier National Park so many were able to go on excursions. Montana did a fabulous job putting on the convention, making it fun and exciting.

I would like to encourage (and challenge) you all to look around you and nominate a deserving RASCOE member for our "Spirit of RASCOE" award. Our RASCOE President appoints a committee of two members to review all nominations and choose one. The 2026 Spirit of RASCOE committee is Debby Sweet and Chuck Land.

Merry Christmas

2025 WINTER REPORT TO RASCOE MEMBERS

FROM JOHN LOHR, DILLARD FINANCIAL SOLUTIONS, INC. NASCOE ACCOUNT ADVISOR

Hope all our RASCOE friends are well.

When I ask Teresa Dillard for ideas about topics for this newsletter article, without hesitation she responded suggesting that I write about our blessings as we enter the holiday season and how this is such a special time to spend with friends and family. Those of us who have known Teresa for a while know she genuinely shares the same beliefs that most RASCOE folks have about blessings and thankfulness.

My wife Carol and I are very fortunate with our 3 children and our 7 grandkids all living nearby and gathering for the holidays to make new memories. We have a special blessing again this year with the grandkid's great grandmother still being with us and ready to celebrate the holidays in her home as she approaches her 100th birthday in January. I am confident that knowing the importance of family to like-minded former FSA folks, you are anticipating making your own wonderful memories this holiday season.

And luckily for all of us, we have the additional extended families of our friends and colleges we've met through our time at FSA, as members of NASCOE, and now as RASCOE members. We had the good fortune and blessing to work careers serving farmers, ranchers, and helping to ensure a reliable food supply, all while helping our local rural communities and nation grow and prosper.

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As FSA employees we had good jobs with a generous benefit package. Our good fortune continued into retirement where we had access to a CSRS or FERS pension plan with some inflation protection, the opportunity to accumulate a robust TSP account with multiple investment options, and the chance for our FEHB plan with its government premium contribution to continue into retirement and even optionally supplement Medicare.

By the time you read this, you'll have made your year-end decisions regarding FEHB and Medicare. Having the opportunity to revise our coverages annually is another nice benefit we enjoy.

Because each year new people are reaching the mandatory Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) age, I will again briefly outline this requirement. As we near the year's end, some of us will be finalizing plans for RMDs from qualified accounts and annuities, where federal income taxes have been deferred.

The age at which you must start taking RMDs depends on your year of birth:

- **Before July 1, 1949:** You start taking RMDs at age 70½
- **On or after July 1, 1949:** You start taking RMDs at age 72
- **On or after January 1, 1951:** You start taking RMDs at age 73
- **On or after January 1, 1960:** You start taking RMDs at age 75

One of the popular RMD strategies for reducing taxes involves donating some amount to charity with a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD). This is especially fortunate as we enter the holiday season to be able to satisfy the RMD requirement and do some charitable-gift giving as well.

The IRS allows you to donate up to \$100,000 a year from an IRA without having to pay income tax. The QCD you withdraw will still count toward your RMD so you don't have to worry about a 50% tax penalty for failing to take distributions.

- Your qualified account custodian must arrange for the transfer of funds directly to an eligible charity. For example, per my request my custodian makes three of our QCDs to the food bank, our church, and a local land trust.
- The QCD reduces your taxable income even if you don't itemize deductions.

Also, as we begin to see our year-end investment reports it is a good time to consider if these investments are still in the best possible position for our current financial situation. Please feel free to contact financial advisors Steve or Teresa Dillard to explore your options. Steve and Teresa can be reached by calling toll free at 1-(800) 692-7643 or by email at dfs@dillardfinancial.com

As always, the entire team at Dillard Financial Solutions stands ready today to help federal employees and retirees. We can show our clients how we can help them move into a position where they get to grow and keep more of their hard-earned retirement dollars.

We wish everyone a Blessed Thanksgiving and Christmas. May everyone find the joy and peace of the season.

All the best!

John

SHERYL BLAKELY – BENEFITS CHAIR/SEA REPRESENTATIVE

Fall is in the air and Winter is creeping in. We celebrated Thanksgiving in the southeast with a cool, crisp day at our home filled with friends and loved ones. We ate plenty and played hard. I hope that you and your family did the same.

After a record-breaking government shutdown, our County Offices are up and running. Again, we are thankful for these jobs and for the benefits enjoyed by the retired employees. We are thankful that we didn't have to wonder if our paycheck would be in the bank on time. Offer a word of cheer and heartfelt thanks if you get a chance to go by a county office near you. May we never take our benefits for granted. Continue to invite friends who have retired or may be soon retiring to become members of RASCOE. Of course, anyone can become an associate member too. It takes all of us to progress. We appreciate all of the work being done by every Officer and Board member of our organization. Stay informed by following the website for RASCOE.org and our Facebook RASCOE page.

As your Benefits chair, I would like to remind you about the Hinge Health app that is free for those who use the BC/BS benefits program. Download Hinge Health from your Play Store on the phone or computer and enjoy a free exercise program as often as you wish. You will also receive free Health Coaching and a Physical Therapist to ensure you are receiving the best exercise program for any area of your body. Try it!! I love this program and use it several times per week.

If there is anything I can do for you, please reach out to me. From Milton and myself, we wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. We hope to see you in 2026. Get involved!

Sheryl Blakely

Southeast Area Representative/RASCOE Benefits Chairperson
mablakely@bellsouth.net

DARLENE ZAHNOW MWA REPORT

As I sit here in Minnesota and look at the temperature on my phone, it says it's a beautiful, balmy two degrees outside with 8 inches of snow and I'm reminded of the wise words someone once said, "You choose where you live." Yes, I chose to live in Minnesota, but I didn't choose the two degrees. In a bit I must take my Schnauzer, Seamus, out and dress him in his boots and fleece coat, or he refuses to cooperate and do his dog business! It's like getting a toddler dressed to go play in the snow.

Your RASCOE Officers and Representatives have been focused on increasing membership to ensure all FSA retirees are aware of what is happening and what needs to be addressed. Our benefits can be at risk the same as anyone else's. I received spreadsheets from the RASCOE Treasurer and Membership Chair, Cindy Hall in Nebraska for members of the MWA states for the past three years. I will be reminding those who have not recently sent in their dues, which I'm sure is just an oversight. I am also going to try to encourage new retirees to join. If you know of anyone that has recently retired, would you please let me know by emailing me at darlene.schouten@gmail.com. If possible, I would appreciate an address and/or email address.

Remember the camaraderie you felt when you worked for FSA, attended training meetings or any of your State and NASCOE functions? I'm sure you felt like I did that many of the folks you worked with became almost family or close to it. After I retired and attended my first RASCOE meeting, I felt at home. Here were my people, my family. You can have those same feelings and support by joining RASCOE and becoming part of the RASCOE Family. You won't regret it, and the dues are minimal – only \$25 per year. If you are new to RASCOE, your first year of membership is free. You can find more information at www.rascoe.org.

I wish you joy, peace, love, laughter and good health during the holidays, and a prosperous and bright year ahead for all of us.

Darlene Zahnow
MWA Representative
(320) 522-0545

DARVIN COLLINS SWA REPRESENTATIVE

Southwest Area RASCOE Roundup – December 2025

A big Howdy from Texas and Happy Holidays to my RASCOE friends and family. Looking back 2025 was an historic year in RASCOE with the passage of HR 82, the Social Security Fairness Act, which repealed the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO). This legislation restored Social Security benefits for millions of public servants.

Having served as SWA Exec, I can tell you that this historic legislation was the product and culmination of many years of tireless legislative work of RASCOE, NASCOE, and NARFE. It was a great win for so many retirees which saw back retroactive benefits paid in 2025.

Unfortunately, 2025 also was a very trying and stressful year out in our FSA county offices with many early retirement decisions being forced upon our FSA employees. If you did decide to retire in 2025 under DRP 1 and DRP 2 but have not joined RASCOE, I would encourage you to join the rowdy crew of RASCOE. Remember your first year of RASCOE dues are FREE and thereafter annual dues are \$25.00 and Associate dues are \$15.00. State RASCOE Associations may also charge a small state dues fee in addition to the RASCOE fee of \$25.00. If retirees in your SWA state have not established a state RASCOE association, and you are interested in doing so, please contact me at Darvin.collins28@gmail.com or text or phone me at 903-721-2404.

As we approach 2026 in RASCOE, I look forward in working with our new RASCOE executive team led by President David Goodson from the great state of Arkansas. I know building membership and making RASCOE even a stronger voice is a top priority for me in the Southwest Area in 2026. I have accepted Kevin Dale's invitation and will be attending the upcoming NAFEC meeting in Lubbock TX, January 7 and 8th. I encourage any of my RASCOE friends in the Texas Panhandle area to contact me for more details concerning this meeting and come join this important meeting. Maintaining our FSA County Committee is very important and defines who we as County Office Employee Retirees are and were. County Committees are the backbone of the FSA program delivery and integrity. We as FSA County Office Retirees should not roll over and stick our heads in the sand and have the attitude that we have paid our dues and whatever happens won't affect my retirement benefits. Retirees should stay engaged and work to maintain benefits for our active county office employees and fight to maintain our FSA County Committees.

Every morning when I wake up, I thank the Good Lord for giving me another day to hug and love my wife, kids, and grandkids. I have been so blessed! The older I get, the more I see and appreciate the blessings in life. Blessings like enjoying a hot cup of coffee in front of the fireplace on a cold morning or hearing the laughter of grandkids in the house during the Holiday Season! MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM THE SWA!!!

God Bless!
Darvin Collins, SWA RASCOE Representative

JANIE HUDSON NWA REPRESENTATIVE

Greetings from the NW Area

As the holiday season approaches, I want to take a moment to wish all my RASCOE and NASCOE friends across the United States a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. No matter where you are—from the snowy mountains of the Northwest Area (I'm keeping my fingers crossed that Southern Idaho has snow by the time this is published) to the sunny coasts of the Southeast Area (who have already enjoyed a good snowstorm)—my thoughts are with you and your families during this special time of year.

This past Thanksgiving, I found myself reflecting with gratitude on the many treasured friendships I have developed over the past 41 years as a member of NASCOE and RASCOE. Our shared experiences, both professional and personal, have woven a tapestry of camaraderie and support that continues to enrich my life long after retirement. Some of us took paths that led us out of the County Offices to work in State or National Offices or even for different agencies throughout the years (I forgive you Brent), but no matter where we ended up, we continued to share our love for agriculture and serving our farmers and ranchers. I am profoundly thankful for the wonderful community we have built together, one that stands as a testament to dedication, service, and lasting bonds.

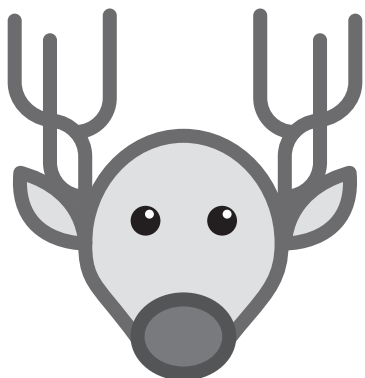
In the upcoming year, I challenge each of you to reach out to at least one retired employee and encourage them to not only join but become active in our association. I look forward to welcoming them to RASCOE in 2026.

As we celebrate Christmas and welcome in the New Year, may your days be filled with joy, peace, and the warmth of family and friends!

Respectfully submitted,

Janie Hudson

Northwest Area RASCOE Representative



RALLY INFORMATION

COMBINED MWA, NEA & SEA RALLY

April 9-11, 2026

Hilton Cincinnati Netherland Plaza,
Cincinnati, Ohio

FAR WEST NWA & SWA RALLY

April 19-22, 2026

Silver Legacy Resort Casino
Reno, NV

See Nascoe Website for More Information

ELECTED OFFICERS AND APPOINTED CHAIRS FOR FY 25-26

DAVID GOODSON

President

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Monticello, AR 71655
David.goodson62@gmail.com
Cell: 870-403-7588

CINDY HALL

Treasurer and

Membership Chair

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Fremont, NE 68025 2133
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Cell: 402-210-1814

SHELLY ODENKIRK

Vice President and

Legislative Chair

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The Villages, FL 32163
Shelly.odenkirk@gmail.com
Cell: 330-464-1475

SHERYL BLAKELY

Benefits Chair

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Sylacauga AL 35151
mablakely@bellsouth.net
Cell: 256-404-2763

MICKI LINEHAN

Secretary and

Publicity Chair

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Clarkston, WA 99403 1738
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BRENT ORR

Webmaster

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East Sandwich MA 02537
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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FSA/ASCS
RETIRED COUNTY EMPLOYEES



SPIRIT OF RASCOE AWARD
NOMINATION FORM

NOMINEES SHOULD EXEMPLIFY THE TRUE "SPIRIT OF RASCOE" IN ACTIONS, SUPPORT AND PROMOTION OF THE RASCOE RETIREE ORGANIZATION.

NOMINATIONS MUST BE SUBMITTED TO THE PUBLICITY CHAIRPERSON NO LATER THAN June 1, 2025

Entries received after the deadline will be reviewed and/or saved for the next year.

MAIL NOMINATION TO:

Micki Linehan
3743 Swallows Nest Ct
Clarkston, WA 99403

NOMINEE NAME: _____

NOMINEE'S ADDRESS: _____

STATE OF RASCOE MEMBERSHIP: _____

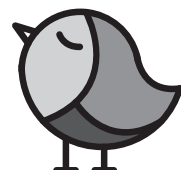
IN SEVENTY-FIVE WORDS OR LESS, EXPLAIN WHY YOU NOMINATED THIS RETIREE FOR THE SPIRIT OF RASCOE AWARD:

OTHER COMMENTS: _____

PAST SPIRIT OF RASCOE AWARDS WINNERS

2005 – ERA JARRARD, GA
2006 – VIRGINIA SHORT, KY
(AND ROSE MELICK, SD)
2007 – CONRAD SHEPP, WI
2008 – DORIS STUCKY, SD
2009 – GENE LUTZ, CO
2010 – CLARA RUTH SAINT, LA
2011 – JUNE FAULK, GA
2012 – GENE VOGNILD, SD
2013 – PAUL NEWTON, IL
2014 – LEO OSBORNE, UT
2015 – LYNDA STEICHEN, SD

2016 – SANDI ROCKER, NE
2017 – MIKE SCHRYER, AL
2018 – JOYCE LOGSDON, KY
2019 – JIM IVERSON, SD
2020-2021 – BRENDA BOOMER, TX
LAURA ANN EVANS, KY
2022 – LAURA HOWELL, KY
2023 – CHARLOTTE SAUNDERS, WV
2024 – LARRY OLSEN, SD
2025 – CHUCK LAND



CINDY HALL
3025 Snead Drive
Fremont, NE 68025-2133

RASCOE NEWS

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