

INCSO CONTACT



Newsletter of the National Staff Organization

June 2005

'A force to be reckoned with...'

NSO Continues to Face Challenges on Wide Range of Fronts



NSO recorded yet another banner year for Representative Assembly attendance. NSO Secretary Mary Henson (MI) reported 393 people registered for the 2005 RA in San Diego, CA, of

which 301 were delegates and 82 alternates. With nearly 5,000 members, this makes the National Staff Union the largest union of staff unions in the world. "NSO has stood up and demonstrated that it is a force to be reckoned with," NSO President Chuck Agerstrand (MI) told delegates at the opening of the two-day meeting. "We have the power, and it comes from you. We have had many challenges this past year. We've seen attempts to strip contract benefits and shift costs to employees. I am pleased to report that we've been successful in fighting back. We have had

meaningful conversations with the National Education Association and it has listened. We forced that conversation and we took the initiative to establish that dialog. For the first time in history we were invited to address UniServ managers at their national conference. We recently completed our second NSO/NEA/NCSEA Labor-Management Summit which was very successful. It was NSO that took the initiative to have that summit. A large number of states sent teams. We dealt with health insurance, pensions, and the critical necessity

to maintain pension and health benefits for retirees. We are already thinking about a third L-M Summit. Meanwhile, through our NSO Health Task Force, we have begun discussions with VSP and Delta Dental about finding ways to save money on vision and dental plans. Initial talks with VSP have begun to find ways to reduce cost of vision plans in staff contracts. We're moving forward."

Agerstrand went on to outline a series of projects and programs for NSO. He reported the NSO Charlie Love Crisis Fund now stands at \$2.6 million. Through investment strategies, the fund has realized an 8.4 percent gain. The National Bargaining Conference in April provided a wide range of topics for NSO affiliate negotiators. It highlighted the recent attempt by the Ohio Education Association to cut health benefits for retirees over age 65.



NSO delegates from across the country met in San Diego June 10-11, to conduct the business of the world's largest union of staff unions

"We've retained three members of what I call the 'legal iron triangle' -- Rob Day, Leonard Page, and Sam McKnight. I met Rob Day 20 years ago and was impressed with his expertise. Now, he has brought in Page and McKnight to help us." Agerstrand stressed that two years ago the NSO Merger/Organizing Committee was asked to come up with a comprehensive organizing training program. The NSO "M/O" has rolled out its program and training manual. NEA has reviewed that manual and program, and NSO is expected to play a significant role in NEA's Organizing Institute.

'Bridges' Comes to RA Delegates



Ian Ruskin answers questions after his performance.

For nearly an hour, NSO RA delegates stepped back in time to meet and hear labor leader and organizer Harry Bridges as portrayed by Ian Ruskin. The one-man performance covered the life of Bridges, with emphasis on his organizing leadership in the 1930's and 1940's.

Bridges led dock workers

in San Francisco to overturn company unions, racial segregation, and bargain contracts with ship owners. It was Bridges who convinced the CIO it was the union's role to oppose shipment of steel to Japan and Germany before World War II and to oppose the Korean War. He believed in a world wide labor movement. Ruskin, who performs before all kinds of groups, told NSO he has a reasonable fee schedule for performances which is "adjustable" depending on group size. Several NSO affiliates expressed interest in having Ruskin bring "Harry Bridges" to their members. For more information, Ruskin can be contacted by e-mail at: theharrybridgesproject@comcast.net. The Harry Bridge Project maintains a Web site at: <http://theharrybridgesproject.org/>. You can read more about the project in the initial plans for the 2005 Representative Assembly on the NSO Web page. The Project is also in final stages to produce a film/DVD documentary titled, "From Wharf Rats to Lords of the Docks." Donations to finish the project can be sent to The Harry Bridges Project, PO Box 662018, Los Angeles, CA 90066, which is a non-profit, 501 (c) 3 organization.

'Not a Pretty Picture...'



So began NSO Vice President for Defense Marius Ambrose's (MD) report to the Assembly. In Alabama, management has gone to court to deny arbitration over a staff evaluation. In Ohio, management filed legal action against professional and associate staff unions to prevent them from filing grievances on behalf of retirees. NSO has retained Rob Day, Leonard Page and Sam McKnight to help our NSO affiliates. "This is obviously an end-run around the attorney representing the Ohio retirees," Ambrose stressed. Ambrose said the three attorneys have been communicating with the attorney representing Ohio retirees. Later during the Assembly, members passed the hat to collect \$2,045 for CORE. Ambrose reported that a similar case has evolved in Iowa, and other states are "brewing." The NSO Executive Committee, prior to the RA, adopted a policy for assisting affiliates who have these and similar challenges to retiree health benefits. He expressed deep appreciation for all of the advocates who agreed to help affiliates. NSO has provided on-site, telephonic or e-mail assistance to 34 NSO affiliates this year. Topics have included: pension and retiree benefits, letters of reprimand, staff suspensions, discharge, failure to follow progressive discipline, merger issues with the American Federation of Teachers, hiring practices, legal suits against NSO members, management harassment, denial of vacation, failure to provide a wellness program, enforcement of an arbitration award, duty of fair representation, and a host of grievances.

'Thanks' from CORE

The Coalition of Retired Employees of the Ohio Education Association ("CORE") expressed deep appreciation for the \$2,045 NSO RA delegates collected on June 10. President Agerstrand has encouraged affiliates to make additional contributions for the legal battle by OEA retired employees who have seen their health care benefits cut after age 65. Donations can be sent to: Jim Prater, Treasurer, Coalition of Retired Employees, 2000 Malvern Avenue, Columbus, OH 43221. Checks can be made out to "CORE." Members are welcome to visit the Ohio retiree Website for more information: www.coreofoea.com.

'So Many to Thank' Says Adler



NSO Vice President Lynn Adler (IL) shared with delegates the lengthy list of volunteers who help with various NSO programs, not the least of which is the annual Winter Advocacy Retreat. "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." Affiliates have received help in the areas of bargaining training, union advocacy, facilitation, conflict resolution, and grievance training. Adler also reported to the Assembly that a new Leadership Academy will be worked into a two-year rotation cycle. Beginning to the Fall of 2006, NSO will have the first Leadership Academy. Affiliates will be asked to send their presidents and one "emerging leader." The bi-annual National Bargaining Conference will be combined with the Pension Training Program. With apologies to anyone missed, Adler listed those who provided field assistance or worked the Winter Advocacy Retreat: Marilyn Aden (CA), Chuck Agerstrand (MI), Marius Ambrose (MD), Renita Bates (FL), Cinci Bellamy (IL), Robert Blackwell (NC), Armin Blaufuss (WI), Karen Bost (CA), Pat Chavez (NM), Peggy Chavez (OH), Rob Day (MI), Terry DiGruttolo (PA), Joe DiVincenzo (NY), Craig Farrell (MI), Len Feldman (CA), Don Frattini (PA), Ron Goldenstein (NE), Tom Greene (MI), Karen Hatfield (MI), Mary Henson (MI), Mike Horner (WA), Ruth Ivory (FL), Mary Ann Jandoli (NJ), Emmitt Jimmar (AL), Glenn Johnson (NJ), Guy Kendall-Freas (NEASO), Dennis Krueger (NSO-R, Iowa), Arch Lewis (MI), Judy Leonard (IL), Will Locke (TN), Donna Masterson (IL), Cheryl McLeod (MD), Bob Mullins (NSO-R, OH), Howard Parish (NJ), Ken Parker (NSO-R, CA), Ralph Perillo (NSO-R), Loren Paul (SD), Fran Pierce (NSO-R), Joyce Puckett (MI), Dave Rathke (IL), John Reilly (NSO-R, MA), Mort Reinhart (NSO-R, NJ), Jackie Rhodes (MI), Jeff Rosenburg (CT), Ginny Ross (NSO-R, OR), Dan Saling (NSO-R), Butch Santicola (PA), Charlie Shaffer (DE), Jack Schamel (NSO-R, NY), Mark Sheehan (CT), Cheryl Singleton (MA), Evelyn Smith (IL), Ann Snyder (CA), John Stephens (CA), John Studer (NJ), Sharon Sutherland (NSO-R, OH), Doug Terwilliger (NEASO), Bob Thompson (MI), Diane Thompson (NE), Sandy Trapino (WI), Barry Tusin (IL), Louise Uphoff (WI), Wanda VanPelt (IL),

Jeff Wahlquist (WA), John Warms (NSO-R, NJ), Bob Willoughby (NJ), Rosemary Wolf (WA), Stephanie Wolkin (MN), Rosemary Wolf (WA), Chris Woods (IL), Wally Zukas (IL). As with Marius Ambrose, Adler stressed that affiliates need to provide as much lead time as possible before requesting assistance. Lining up people on short notice is difficult.

RA Tackles Union Business

Assembly delegates passed six new business items which would: 1) Encourage NSO members and their affiliates to urge support for Amendment 8-11(b) to the NEA Bylaws during the coming NEA Representative Assembly. "If the NEA amendment does not pass, the NEA-NY will likely cease to exist. If that happens, our NSO members in New York may soon be unemployed," says Delegate Stephen D. Maggio (NY). The provision deals with "Standards for State Affiliates" and a waiver of the secret ballot election rule. New York is currently ready to merge with the New York Federation of Teachers. 2) Require that NSO oppose S.B. 852, federal legislation known as the "Fairness in Asbestos Injury Reform (FAIR) Act." Delegate Susan Vento (MN) testified that if S.B. 842 were enacted, it would add insult and injury to the lives and deaths of thousands of asbestos victims and their families." Members urged to ask their Congressional representatives to defeat the measure. 3) Have NSO communicate with NEA and NCSEA in order to guarantee that NEA state and local affiliates adhere to the NEA UniServ Guidelines, specifically the "Staffing Requirements" provision which states, "Every UniServ staff person shall be employed at a salary corresponding to the state associate staff salary schedule." The provision is designed to bring Local Option UniServ staff up to staff employed by state associations. 4) Have NSO oppose placing age-based limits (and other forms of age discrimination) in any form on post-employment benefits and health care, including the elimination of benefits at Medicare eligibility. NSO shall assist affiliates in efforts to remove age-based limits in all affiliate collective bargaining agreements no later than the next round of bargaining. NSO is to inform the NEA executive director and state affiliates of its members' opposition to post employment age based limits. 5) Have NSO President Agerstrand investigate and take action surrounding concern that members of governance at NEA Headquarters and affiliates across the country are dismantling the long-estab-

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2005-2006 NSO Calendar

Be sure to check the NSO Web page for continuous update on the NSO Calendar.

NSO Research Committee

September 10, 2005, Las Vegas, NV

NSO Merger/Organizing Committee

September 16-17, 2005, TBD

NSO Executive Committee

September 29 - October 1, 2005, TBD

Western States Coordinated Bargaining Council

October 14-15, 2005, Billings, MT

Corridor and Southern States Coordinated Bargaining Council,

October 14-15, 2005,
Riveria Hotel, Las Vegas, NV

NSO Executive Committee

January 10-12, 2006
Sarasota Hyatt, Sarasota, FL

NSO Winter Advocacy Retreat,

January 13-14, 2006,
Sarasota Hyatt, Sarasota, FL

NSO Executive Committee

March 30-31, 2006, TBD

NSO National Bargaining Conference/ Pension Training

April 21-22, 2006, TBD

NSO Executive Committee

June 6-7, 2006, Fairmont Hotel, New Orleans,
LA

NSO Representative Assembly

June 9-10, 2006, Fairmont Hotel,
New Orleans, LA

lished separation between staff and governance to the detriment of NEA members and staff. 5) Have the NSO Executive Committee study the feasibility of developing a plan for organizing local, state, and national organizations of union staff not employed by NEA or its affiliates. Two new business items were referred to the NSO Executive Committee: 1) That NSO may provide monetary assistance directly to the Coalition of Retiree Employees of OEA ("CORE") so long as it neither requires a dues increase nor reduction in service; 2) Creation of a "Solidarity Fund" to assist health care litigation assistance through a one-time diversion of the \$25 crisis fund dues. Delegates also passed the proposed 2005-2006 Budget which totals at \$893,032. Dues are \$130 for associate and \$242 for professional staff, and the standard \$25 assessment for each member for the NSO Charlie Love Crisis Fund.

Schamel Gets Oxfeld Award



Jack Schamel (NSO-R, NY) is this year's recipient of the Emil Oxfeld Advocacy Award. Agerstrand said that Schamel, a long time staffer in New York, readily agrees to assist NSO in arbitrations across the country. "I retired now and maybe I don't have settlement skills, but I love to fight!," Schamel joyously announced to the RA.

**Be Sure to Check
the NSO Web page for a complete report on
the 2005 NSO Representative Assembly
www.nationalstaff.org**

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