

President's End of Year Report 2006

As the end of my term as NCSSMA President approaches it is time to provide you with an overview of NCSSMA's activities for the second half of the year. As I reflect upon this past year, I find that it was a very productive and rewarding experience to represent you. We faced many challenges and experienced some successes and failures. Our internal relationships with agency leadership continue to be positive. They are receptive to our input, listen to our ideas and are willing to make changes when they agree.

As an association we are well-respected on the Hill and we worked very hard this year to improve our grassroots activity. With shrinking budgets this becomes more critical than ever if we hope to achieve a level of funding that will allow us to provide good public service. We established a home email network of nearly 2000 members to facilitate communication on this important issue. We played an important role in supporting an Amendment to the FY06 Supplemental Appropriations measure that provided SSA with an additional \$38 million dollars for costs associated with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. This was a major victory for our grassroots efforts! We continue to work to get our representatives to support the President's budget for 2007. In August I met with AARP, Senate staff, and the Social Security Advisory Board to discuss field office and teleservice center issues and concerns, detail the potential impact of the proposed funding cuts, and make the case for support of adequate funding for SSA's budget. I have contacted FMA, the Consortium for Disability, NADE, NCDDD and other organizations to discuss strategies and working together on this continuing effort. Bethany Paradis and I also met with our commissioner, Jo Anne Barnhart, to discuss the budget situation and possible furloughs.

I continue to be actively involved with the Government Managers Coalition to pursue government wide issues such as FERS sick leave and a two-year probationary period. We met with OPM in August to discuss these issues.

NCSSMA continues to be actively involved in improving the quality of SSA training and IVT. Brian Gostomski represented us on a workgroup to develop Crossover/Generalist Training for CRs. We commented on a proposal for Crossover/Generalist Training in April and are glad to see this becoming available. We also sent in a paper with suggestions on improving the quality of IVT broadcasts and were invited to participate in a workgroup that was established to look at that issue. Jill Russell was appointed as our representative. One recommendation from this workgroup was to establish an IVT Quality Review Board. The Staffing and Training Committee also provided feedback on the National Training Vision Proficiency Workload Proposal which would have a significant impact on our members.

The Automation Committee's periodic conference calls with OAS have enabled us to discuss issues including the Monthly Wage Verification Program Pilot, SS-5 Assistant, the EC Process, Secure Printers, Annual Certification of Fax and TTY Lines, Call Center/CAPRS Problems, DCO Login Assistant, Communications of Systems Problems, and OWA Access. We sent in suggestions for the Productivity Workshop that was held

this summer and submitted a paper proposing the expansion of PIN access and more flexibility in accessing lists for other offices to facilitate sharing work amongst offices. The latter paper resulted in a conference call with Brad Flick, Director of Systems Security in OPSOS that enabled us to discuss this issue fully. Hopefully we will see some changes in this area in the future. Recently we submitted a paper detailing a list of enhancements needed in eWork to provide the level of efficiency we need to keep up with work issues and streamline this workload across components. We also provided input on a Draft MSOM for work measurement transition.

NCSSMA has also been active in a variety of programmatic areas. The SSI Committee wrote a letter regarding Monthly Wage Reporting which was sent in to Linda McMahon in June. Recently we were invited to participate in a workgroup to develop policies and procedures for the SSI Wage Reporting Initiative. Sylviane Haldiman will be representing NCSSMA. When members contacted me about the problems associated with EM-06035's requirement to use unit codes, "NEW1" and "NEW2" for high priority MDWs, NCSSMA immediately alerted DCO. That EM was subsequently rescinded and revised to include unit designations that would work with the Consolidated List Program and how we assign and control this workload. Twelve suggestions were submitted to the FO/TSC/ODAR/DDS Cooperative Efforts Workgroup for consideration in their efforts to improve coordination of workloads across components. We also commented on the Strategic Planning for TSR Transactions document that was sent to the regions for comment. In July, I participated in a meeting with Regional Medicare Coordinators to discuss implementation of the Medicare Part D Redetermination Process and the Part B Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amount Provision. In early August we sent in a letter detailing our concerns with the Representative Payee Monitoring Reviews offering suggestions to improve the process.

In an effort to streamline the disability workload, we sent in a letter of support for mandating the use of I-3368Pro for large, for-profit third party filers. Additionally, we sent a letter to Jo Armstrong, Associate Commissioner for Electronic Services, with suggestions for improving the online 3368 and Disability Application. A small survey is underway to gather better information about what problems we are encountering with the Disability Internet process. We also commented on the FLAG Report on "The E-Gov Strategy Refinement Project" which laid out an overall strategy for pursuing expansion of E-Gov services and made recommendations about what Internet services SSA should make available.

As a result of the difficulties experienced with the changes imposed by the IRTPA legislation, we have made many suggestions to improve the SS-5 and ease some of the evidence requirements. The Title II Committee participated in a conference call aimed at improving the SS-5. They are currently working with Ken Swiatek to draft a summary of their suggestions to submit to OISP. We were happy to see the changes in policy recently released for name change situations. In a similar vein, we were asked to comment on a proposal to require field offices to see a photo ID to prove identity before rendering service to visitors.

With a new performance management system coming, NCSSMA has been working hard to voice your concerns about the need for more “S” positions in addition to insuring that we have all the training and tools necessary to do this successfully. Lenny Kanick represented NCSSMA on the workgroup tasked with developing the agency’s Service Level Indicators. We also commented on the workgroup’s final product. In mid July NCSSMA reviewed and commented on the proposed expectations for field office and TSC positions.

When members contacted me about the problems with the Sunflower Assets Management program and the impossibly short time frame for completion of the Annual Physical Inventory your voices were heard. The concerns were forwarded to DCO and we were grateful to receive an extension on the due date. We will continue to pursue a better system than Sunflower.

As a result of our efforts last year, we saw the release of funds and a variety of options for field managers to purchase ergonomic furniture this summer. We were also invited to participate in a workgroup whose focus will be recommending several different models for reception and FEI areas for field offices. Jackie Delgadillo will represent us on this workgroup. They will consider several criteria in determining appropriate size and layout.

Another area of concern for us is Systems Sanctions and the improper use of “referent power.” We were hearing about some broad interpretations of the term “friend” and other areas that were resulting in suspensions and thought managers needed to be made aware of them. We discussed this issue with Linda McMahon, followed up with a paper detailing our concerns and shared a message with our members to urging them to be careful.

Finally, I had the privilege of appointing Ellen Kildal as our new Webmaster. Dave Hable who did a wonderful job for us has retired. We wish him well. In closing I would like to thank all of our committee members and our Executive Council for all the hard work they did this year. As you can see it was a productive year and I appreciate everyone’s support. I have decided to run for re-election at NCSSMA’s annual meeting in Milwaukee and hope to have the privilege of serving you all for another year. We still have much to do.