



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SECURITY
MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATIONS, INC.

805 Broadway Street
Suite 500
Vancouver, WA 98660
TELEPHONE: 866-731-4116
FAX: 360-696-7944
www.ncssma.org

7/10/2017

President
CHRISTOPHER DETZLER
Vancouver, WA

Vice President
VALERIE FISHER
New Brunswick, NJ

Secretary
KARLA MONTEMAYOR
East Hills Bakersfield, CA

Treasurer
ELIZABETH WILLIAMS
Mount Prospect, IL

TSC Representative
VALERIE FABRE
Houston, TX TSC

Executive Officer
BECKY ARCHER
Reno, NV

Immediate Past President
RICK WARSINKSEY
Cleveland, OH

**REGIONAL ASSOCIATION
PRESIDENTS**

LISA CHRABOLOWSKI
Nashua, NH

BEPIE SIBLEY
Queensbury, NY

VANESSA J. MARTIN
Martinsburg, WV

DAVID LESCARI
McMinnville, TN

MONA HARTER
South Bend, IN

MONIQUE THERIOT
Lafayette, LA

JERRY NELSON
Waterloo, IA

PEGGY MURPHY
Great Falls, MT

SARAH ARNOLD
Bakersfield, CA

JAN STILL
Bellevue, WA

Washington Representative
RACHEL EMMONS
Phone: (202) 547-8530
rachele@greystone-group.com

Ms. Mary Horne
Deputy Commissioner for Operations
Social Security Administration
6401 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21235

Dear Mary:

The National Council of Social Security Management Associations (NCSSMA) has shared a positive working relationship with the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the agency's executives for over 40 years. The basis for the relationship and support provided to NCSSMA and our managers and supervisors in SSA's field offices and teleservice centers are in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and specifically for SSA in the Personnel Policy Manual (PPM).

The agency's relationship with NCSSMA is mandated by the CFR - 5 CFR 251.201 Subpart B (a). Agency support to these organizations is governed by 5 CFR 251.202. Section 251.202 at (a) (2) provides the agency with the authority to "...pay expenses of employees to attend professional organization meetings when such attendance is...directly concerned with agency functions or activities and the agency can derive some benefits from employee attendance at such meetings." At 251.202 (a) (3) the agency is advised to follow "...a liberal policy in authorizing excused absence for...employees who are willing to pay their own expenses to attend a meeting of a professional association...from which an agency could derive some benefits."

The PPM mirrors the CFR regarding support of management associations. At S251_2 5.6.1 it states: "Payment for travel and per diem may be authorized for association members to attend association meetings that are scheduled with SSA management officials for the purpose of discussing SSA as well as association business (emphasis added) and preliminary or follow-up meetings on preceding or following days." At S251_2 5.6.3 the PPM provides: "Excused absence may be approved for association members to attend association meetings."

The above citations form the legal and regulatory basis for both payment of travel and per diem to association members (e.g. NCSSMA EC members/regional association EC members) to attend meetings with SSA executive management at both the national and regional levels. They also provide the basis for excused absence for association members who are willing to pay their own expenses to have meetings and meet with SSA executives at both the national and regional levels.

The work NCSSMA does at our annual meeting directly affects and benefits the entire agency, including Operations. We use these meetings to pass resolutions and plan for the following year. These meetings set the course of action for working with the agency on new and existing initiatives. For example, in 2016, we passed a resolution to work with DCO on having more involvement in negotiations regarding telework. Through and directed by the resolution, our work and communication with DCO yielded two representative positions on the telework negotiations advisory team. Another resolution focused on NCSSMA's involvement in redesigned training. Through this resolution and work with the Office of Learning, NCSSMA provided representation and worked closely with the Project Director on the Operations Training Team as well as participated in the development of management training on the new Reasonable Accommodation Policy.

We also dedicate a significant amount of time preparing for the efforts we undertake in the upcoming year with Congress in order to educate its Members and staff regarding the justification and need for agency resources. These meetings with House and Senate Appropriators, Authorizers, other Members of Congress, Office of Personnel Management, Office of Management and Budget and the Social Security Advisory Board are paramount to our function and, in turn, paramount for the benefit of the agency.

For many years, NCSSMA has received four days of administrative leave and even five for longer trips and those travelling from more distant destinations. In some of the recent years, we were only provided with three days; the rationale being that it was not clear the agency would have a budget and we could be operating under a continuing resolution. Based on advice from the prior DCO and in an attempt to avoid the uncertainty each fiscal year, NCSSMA deliberated and made the decision to move our annual meetings, where practical from a budget standpoint, prior to the end of the fiscal year. In 2016 our meeting in Indianapolis was in August and we received four days of administrative leave since there was no budget issue. We have done the same thing for the annual meetings in 2017 and 2018 to avoid similar budget issues.

Delegates need to travel before Tuesday to attend the meeting that begins Tuesday morning. Many delegates travel home on Thursday, even though we are in session until noon. For those farthest from the meeting, this creates travel difficulties. That said, NCSSMA is including the travel days within our request for four administrative days. We believe NCSSMA has worked hard to compromise on the cost sharing for the NCSSMA/DCO meetings; however, NCSSMA is in no position to offer its delegate attendees time. We must rely on you, our agency leaders to address this issue.

We certainly understand that the agency is being cautious regarding the use of administrative time in light of recently-passed legislation; however, it is our understanding that this legislation is directed toward limitation of administrative leave as it applies to disciplinary action and not management association meetings. In addition, we have yet to see any guidance from the agency and our understanding is guidance will not be out until Fiscal Year (FY) 2018. NCSSMA has discussed the use of administrative time, and specifically this new legislation, with our Government Managers Coalition colleagues who also agree that the legislation did not intend to limit these types of meetings or the use of administrative time. Although NCSSMA is a management association and not a union, and as such we are not covered under any such union/management agreement, we would like to note that the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) holds similar planning meetings where the agency approves the use of official time to cover the meeting and association travel time. In addition, AFGE members are provided with additional time prior to the meeting for preparation. Our request is a modest one, for the three days of meetings and the preceding travel day for a total of four days.

We have made a concerted effort to address the agency's concerns on having meetings at the beginning of a fiscal year. We have also worked diligently to maintain a positive and productive relationship with agency executives and are certainly mindful of our current budget climate and the need for compromise. That said, the work NCSSMA does during our annual meetings is paramount to continuing to develop a good working relationship with Operations and all other components, in addition to our ability to advocate for agency resources. We appreciate your reconsideration in granting four days of administrative leave for attendees for the 2017 NCSSMA Annual Meeting. Please do not hesitate to let me know if we can provide any additional information. I am happy to discuss with you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Detzler".

Christopher Detzler
NCSSMA President