



# National Staff Organization

United to Lead, to Promote, to Secure and to Defend



## NSO REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY 2006

SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA      JUNE 9-10, 2006

The 2006 NSO Representative Assembly was held June 9-10 at the Fairmont San Jose where 382 attended (229 delegates, 78 alternate delegates and 12 guests).

The world's largest union of union staff - that's what the National Staff Organization has become. According to NSO President Chuck Agerstrand, it is through the efforts of literally hundreds of staff leaders that have helped NSO grow from a mere 35 members in a handful of states in 1969, to 4,986 from 90 affiliates in 50 states and the District of Columbia. A major portion of that growth came with the decision by the 1978 NSO Representative Assembly to organize associate staff members.

Today, NSO has over 2,300 full-time and over 106 part-time associate staff members.

NSO's record of advocacy has also had astounding growth. Under NSO's legal, arbitration, and field assistance policy, \$245,216.32 for the year ending August 31, 2005 was spent for cases ranging from NLRB unit determinations, dismissal arbitrations and reprimands, to health and retirement legal cases. The NSO Crisis Fund currently has more than \$3 million.

NSO believes in member participation. The talent and expertise among members mean there is plenty of help available for affiliates. Agerstrand reminded delegates that NSO members voluntarily travel throughout the United States to provide direct on-site aid to affiliates and members. In one instance, it took nearly a dozen NSO members three years to help an affiliate gain recognition and secure a first-time master contract.

The 2007 Winter Advocacy Retreat (WAR) will be held January 11-13 in Garden Grove (just 10 minutes from the famous Crystal Cathedral and not far from Disneyland).

Remember to visit your NSO site: <http://www.nationalstaff.org>

Thank you so much for electing me to attend and report on this very important meeting.

**Carole Hester**

**CAS Newsletter Editor/Communications Chair**

## **From Dawn Basurto, NSO/RA Delegate and Area 2 Representative**

Thank you again for allowing me to attend the NSO RA this weekend in San Jose. President Chuck Agerstrand acknowledged CAS and CSO for a job well done in obtaining a great settlement. He also gave an inspiring speech to all to stand together **UNITED and not DIVIDED. We are only as strong as we allow ourselves to be.** He also emphasized how an injury to one is an injury to all.

It was also stressed that CAS members need to know who NSO is and what they do for us as UNIONS, and I think CAS has done a good job in doing so by having NSO trainers and NSO assisting in grievances and Arbitrations.

There were new business items that we unanimously defeated by the delegates that would have taken some of our union power away.

Jeff Blodget was the guest speaker from Wellstone. He spoke of power which in French is pronounced "*potere*" which means (to be able). We are all vying for power and the places that we need to focus that power is Organizing, Listening and Building relationships, while also communicating to the members effectively. This was a great RA and I am thankful that I was given the opportunity to attend to have a voice for you.

## **Vicki Kramer, NSO/RA Delegate and Area 4 Representative**

This was my first time attending the NSO/RA and I would like to thank all CAS for electing me to represent our union. It was a privilege to be able to participate in the business of the union on a national level.

One of the experiences I left with was the sense of camaraderie and solidarity from such a large group of people. Even though there was disagreement on issues brought up in the course of new business, the atmosphere remained open to the thoughts, perspectives, and opinions of all who expressed them.

I also learned that every state affiliate's actions/successes/failures have an effect on all of us as individuals and our union as a whole. It is sobering to know that our actions as union advocates have such an impact nationally. It is also a strong motivator to keep up the good fight.

## **Linda Virden NSO/RA Delegate and Area 4 Representative**

What a great learning experience the NSO / RA was for me. Hearing President Agerstrand say "What happens in your state affects all NSO members" showed how important it is that we all act as one union and stand together.

I learned that NSO provides support for CAS in bargaining, grievances, legal defense and organizing. I never realized how the work was voluntary and I am astonished by their dedication. I am very grateful for having had this opportunity to represent CAS at the RA

## Roseanne N. Becher, NSO/RA Delegate and Area 5 Representative



*NSO President Chuck Agerstrand*

NSO President Chuck Agerstrand opened with news of “employer hypocrisy” and “managers mistreatment of employees.” While recognizing the bargaining gains of NEASO and CAS/CSO and how good contracts can have a positive affect, Mr. Agerstrand cautioned that bad contracts could set bad standards. In closing, he expressed the need to build “One Strong National Union” declaring NSO was to “allow no attacks on members.”

Vice President of Defense, Marius Ambrose, reported some bad news and some good. The bad is that out of 31 arbitrations 22 were lost. The good is NEA and NEA–Alaska have agreed to pay \$750,000.00 to settle claims brought by three current and former female employees against their supervisor, Thomas Harvey. EEOC charges alleged the then Interim Assistant Director of NEA-Alaska engaged in abusive behavior towards them because of their gender, including screaming, yelling and physically threatening actions. Mr. Ambrose also identified two noteworthy cases involving retiree health benefits; *Cherry v. Auburn Gear, Inc.* and *Bouboulis et al. v. Transport Workers Union of America.*

Mort Reinhart, Pension Benefits Consultant, advised that as the market has slowed in asset recovery more pressure would be to reduce benefits.

Featured speaker Jeff Blodgett, Director of Wellstone Action and Wellstone Action Fund, presented a blueprint for “Building power in all arenas.” He emphasized the importance of “Listening” as well as “Planning,” and spoke of the qualities of effective leadership. In addition, he described the groups of people necessary to be successful in campaigning and organizing for the long term.

In presenting the NSO Pension Benefits Committee Report, Ron Goldstein recognized the contributions made by Liz Tokar of CAS with “A special thanks.”

Another Associate staff member made news on the second day at the RA. Kathy Hill, President of the Indiana Associate Staff Organization was voted Director of Region 5. Ms. Hill is the first Associate staff member in NSO history to be elected to the NSO Executive Committee. CONGRATULATIONS, associate staff.

Thank you, CAS members, for the opportunity to represent you at this year’s NSO RA.



Betty Tate and Allison Herndon represented the newest union to affiliate with NSO – from Richmond, Virginia. They are support staff and only organized in January. They had no funds to attend the NSO RA, but recognizing the importance of being part of the RA, raised the money through various fund-raising projects. At the RA, they sold name badges for \$5/ea. to raise more funds. Although individuals slipped them some donations at the Rep Assembly, it was CAS who made the only “group” donation.

## **Una Rueb, NSO/RA Delegate and Area 5 Representative**

What a surprise! There are two Kathy Hills. Yes, one is our own CAS President from Ventura and the other is from Indiana who ran for the Area 5 NSO Director seat. In the NSO elections, there were two candidates running for NSO Region 5 Director race: Kim Lane, from Ohio, Professional staff, and Kathy Hill from Indiana Associate Staff Organization, who won by two (2) votes and is now on the NSO Executive Board. Kathy is currently serving as President of her union as well.

One of the most interesting facets of this close election was the lesson in parliamentary procedure that came up:

- Which take precedence? An organization's Constitution or its Bylaws?
- Calling for a standing vote, for the second vote
- The second vote resulted in a tie, so President Agerstrand voted to uphold his decision declaring Kathy Hill as the winner of the election.

None of us had ever seen an election quite like this.

One of the key speakers from NSO was Jeff Blodgett, Executive Director of Wellstone Action and Fund. Blodgett was awarded a Bush Leadership Fellowship in 1997 that allowed him to receive his Masters of Public Administration at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government (KSG) in 1998. His studies at KSG focused on non-profit and political management and leadership.

Today Blodgett trains, teaches and speaks extensively on campaigns and election, leadership development, and organizing for political power. He is a dynamic speaker.

New Orleans TA thanked all of the states who contributed to the "Katrina Disaster."

## **Maureen Keating, NSO/RA Delegate and Area 1 Representative**

It was wonderful being able to attend the NSO RA in San Jose and I thank you again for the opportunity.

This year the Virginia Education Association Staff Organization was the latest to join the NSO. To support the cost of attending, the members held a fundraiser selling name holders. The California Associate Staff gave a group donation which really is what the NSO is all about – supporting each other no matter the distance between us. CAS reps were the only ones contributing as a group.

It was, as always, interesting to see the democratic process in play when the New Business Items were brought to the floor of the assembly. The local associations declared their need for maintaining their autonomy and voted down a motion to become a federation (all one under the NSO) as opposed to the current figuration of a confederation (many under one). Additionally the assembly voted down making the NSO the bargaining agent for all affiliates.

Items showing support for local affiliations, such as the loss of seniority of our Union Brothers and Sisters in New York who were merged with the AFT and asked local president to contact the NEA with their disapproval. Additional, the good news was that the Alaska staff won their EEOC complaint against the NEA Exec for extreme abuses against staff members (mostly women and Associate). It is disheartening to know that the NEA has not taken action against such an employee and again the assembly agreed that local presidents should send letters to NEA expressing their extreme displeasure and disappointment with the lack of action on NEA's part.

All in all, it was a very worthwhile experience.

## Michelle Bomberry, NSO/RA Delegate and Area 1 Representative

Thank you for allowing me to attend this year's NSO RA in San Jose. As a first-time delegate it was great to actually see the governance portion of NSO at work. My experience with NSO has been limited – pretty much the Savings Card and dues coming from my check, so the opportunity to be an active part of the decision-making was very informative.

Friday was a day filled with reports. We heard from the President who reminded us that NSO is the only 100% volunteer union of its kind, but amazingly offers the same, or more services as other national labor unions with paid staff. These services include assistance with bargaining, organizing, grievances, and legal defense, as well as training programs. The Vice\_President of Defense reviewed issues that unions around the country are facing – particularly the fight for retiree health benefits, and for benefits in general.

The theme of the RA this year seemed to be the desire to build NSO into a stronger National Union, pointing out that a poor settlement or weak affiliate in one area of the country affects us all. Two of the New Business Items that were presented on Saturday reflected this desire – calling for a revise of the NSO Constitution to declare NSO the bargaining agent for all affiliates.

Further revisions allowed for the NSO President to assign “trustees” to step in when NSO deemed necessary (in the case of an affiliate bargaining contracts inconsistent with NSO Collective Bargaining standards, financial mismanagement, etc.). In the eyes of your CAS delegation (and dually agreed upon by the CSO delegation) the revisions were misguided. In the opinion of the CAS delegates, a strong national union gleans its strength from powerful and strong state affiliates.



## Norma Ortiz, NSO/RA Delegate and Area 3 Representative

I am grateful to CAS members for electing me to represent you at this NSO RA. The meeting is all about strengthening unions in America. NSO is the only union of unions. NSO President Chuck Agerstrand called for a strong national union in his opening remarks. “What happens in your state, affects all NSO members,” he said.

Chuck cited NSO’s reputation for being the mover and shaker in union advocacy circles as an important component for supporting a strong national union.

NSO has been “Johnny on the spot” to help CAS when we needed help with myriad challenges: Arbitrations, bargaining....you name it, CAS membership in NSO has increased solidarity. Networking also takes place at an NSO RA as delegates spread their accumulative skills and knowledge with one another.

One rep stated, “In his opening speech, President Chuck (Agerstrand) really made me reevaluate how we as individual states can all benefit if we act together. We need to act as one union – what affects one of us affects all of us. I really felt a connection today that I hadn’t felt before.”

## Rhonda King, NSO/RA Delegate and Area 3 Representative

National Staff Organization members from across the country met in San Jose on June 9-10 for the 2006 NSO Representative Assembly. It was an honor to attend on behalf of the California Associate Staff.

**Every vote counts** seemed to be the theme of this year's RA. While associate staff outnumber other NSO member groups, no associate staff member has ever served on the NSO Executive Board. With a narrow two-vote lead, history was made when the "other" Kathy Hill, Indiana Associate Staff Organization President, was elected NSO Area 5 Director. In another vote regarding parliamentary procedure and the Executive Board election, a tie vote of the delegates resulted. President Agerstrand then cast his vote and upheld Kathy's election to Area 5 Director.

Remember, every vote counts in every election! Thank you for the opportunity to cast a vote on your behalf at this very important NSO annual business meeting. As NSO President Chuck Agerstrand states, "The information shared and the decisions made at the RA play a major role in building solidarity among our members and strengthening our resolve to remain united."



*Delegates elected to be representatives at this year's NSO Representative Assembly in San Jose were (missing is Norma Ortiz)*

*L-R:*

*Front row: Maureen Keating*

*Second row: Carole Hester and Roseanne Boecher*

*Third row: Una Rueb, Rhonda King, Vicki Kramer*

*Last row: Linda Virden, Dawn Basurto, Michelle Bomberry*



*Networking with Hawaii State Teachers Association reps, giving them bargaining and organizing helps.*

*L-R: JoAnn Ogawa and Eric Nakamini, Karen Honda and Mark Nakashima. They were excited to hear from CAS reps successful tactics and our reps will be sending them some of our tools used in this recent bargaining go-round.*