

National Organization  of Professional Hispanic
Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees



La Voz

Newsletter

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President's Message

Angel Figueroa, President



We are going into the fall Season and the changing of the leaves for some of us reminds us that we are headed for the Holidays when we pause to spend time with family and friends. In the meantime, your council, committees, and focus groups work to accomplish tasks that will benefit our members. For example, the strategic plan focus groups continue to work with Mari Hrebik to develop the blue print that will be refined into our first strategic plan. Our committee dealing with advancement and development of member careers is busy setting up a support structure for those submitting job applications. I am working with Jacqueline Padron, national HEPM, and Robert Apodaca, regional assistant chief, to prepare a profile of our members and Hispanics in our work force to present to the Chief in November.

Members and others have asked about tangible products that they can receive from NOPHNRCSE for their membership and annual dues. One of the tangible products that I can identify for you is leadership development. Most members work in a focus group, committee, or

the National Council during their membership. This is really improving their career outlook by giving them public exposure and leadership training. While you are working for NOPHNCSE, you are being observed by many in our agency that will be selecting officials for jobs, and this is a huge advantage for those of you wishing advancement.

For those who prefer to stay in place and aren't interested in upward mobility, committee work will still enhance their careers and respectability in their work place. Other benefits include networking, assistance with job applications, and referrals for career advancement. As more of our members arrive at the GS 12 and above positions, they become mentors and selecting officials to others.

I hope that all of you have a happy holiday season and that you feel your organization continues to represent you before agency leadership.

And thanks to those who volunteer!



Note: Angel had major surgery on Thursday, Sept. 30. Due to complications, they had to redo the same surgery on Wednesday, Oct. 6. That was a setback and recovery is slow but he is home now and feeling much better. He has access to his e-mail if you would like to drop him a get well wish.

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Career Advancement Summit

The Third Annual Federal Hispanic Career Advancement Summit will be held on November 29-30, 2010, at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Natcher Conference Center, in Bethesda, Maryland. See <http://www.federalhispanicsummit.org/>.

For the first time, this year's Summit has been extended to two days to address the numerous requests for longer executive coaching sessions -- a small group discussion between current members of the Senior Executive Service (SES) and those aspiring to join the SES.

The 2010 Summit will build on the enormous success of the previous Summit. In 2009, the Summit's registration experienced a 25 percent growth over the previous year as they were able to accommodate over 850 Federal employees from 60+ Federal agencies and components (virtually all arms of the Federal Government participated in this event).

Open to all Federal employees who work for "Uncle Sam," the Summit aims to help attendees realize their professional aspirations and develop individual leadership competencies in order to prepare for senior positions in the Federal sector. To this end, the Summit provides an unparalleled variety of career, leadership, and networking activities. Senior level keynote speakers and Executive Coaching Workshops provide attendees direct access to prominent Federal executives who can provide invaluable insights on successfully navigating the Federal workplace. Moreover, the carefully selected workshops closely track skills that are associated with the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) Executive Core Qualifications, the

qualifications that aspiring SES must satisfy in order to advance to that leadership level within the Federal Government.

The widespread endorsement of the Summit by Federal departments and agencies reflects the Federal Government's commitment to enhancing its career development initiatives. Past Summit's attendees have commented that this activity has quickly become a must-attend educational opportunity for employees interested in advancing their Federal career.

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Hispanics, White Women Remain Underrepresented in Federal Offices

Elizabeth Newell, Government Executive News, July 26, 2010

A number of demographic groups remain underrepresented in the federal workforce, but agencies are making slight progress in hiring individuals with targeted disabilities, an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [report](#) shows.

According to the report, EEOC has documented subtle changes in the composition of the federal workforce during the last decade. Participation of women, Hispanics or Latinos, and Asians increased slightly between fiscal 1999 and fiscal 2009.

But despite the longer-term trend, the report shows the participation rate for women was slightly down in fiscal 2009 compared to fiscal 2008, falling from 44.13 percent to 44.06 percent. As of 2009, just fewer than 8 percent of federal workers were Hispanic or Latino, 66 percent were white, 18 percent were black or African-American, 6 percent were Asian, 2 percent were American Indian or Alaska native, 0.3 percent was Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 0.7 percent were two or more races.

These numbers show women, Hispanics or Latinos, people of two or more races and white women remain underrepresented in the federal government compared to their overall representation in the national civilian labor force according to data from the 2000 census, the report stated.

EEOC's statistics also indicated some differences in pay and typical seniority across groups. The average grade for permanent and temporary General Schedule employees in fiscal 2009 was 9.9 (\$51,869 in annual pay), according to EEOC. Hispanic or Latino employees, black or African-American employees, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander employees, American Indian or Alaska native employees and employees of two or more races all had average grades lower than the government wide average.

The average General Schedule grade for women remained at 9.3 (\$43,679 annually) in fiscal 2009, more than one grade below the average grade level for men of 10.4 (\$49,604 in yearly salary).

The report showed progress in one area. The percentage of federal employees with targeted disabilities held steady in fiscal 2009, halting a 13-year decline. Targeted disabilities include deafness, blindness, missing extremities, partial or complete paralysis, convulsive disorders, mental retardation, mental illness, and distortion of the limb and/or spine. Despite the modest net gain of 236 employees in fiscal 2009 from fiscal 2008, people with targeted disabilities still represented less than 1 percent of the total federal workforce.

Employees with targeted disabilities also had an average General Schedule grade of 8.5 (\$42,019 in annual pay), nearly 1.5 grades below the government wide average.

“As the largest employer in the nation, the federal government should lead the way in creating a diverse and just workplace,” EEOC Chairwoman Jacqueline A. Berrien said. “Government agencies need to continue to recruit and promote employees who represent the tapestry of America.”

EEOC also reported on the number of complaints filed. Federal employees and applicants filed 16,947 complaints alleging employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, disability and reprisal, up 1.2 percent from fiscal 2008, but down almost 6 percent from fiscal 2005.

Unlike the private sector, federal agencies are responsible for processing and investigating charges of discrimination filed against them. The average processing time for conducting investigations rose from 180 days in fiscal 2008 to 186 days in fiscal 2009. The average processing time for closing complaints also increased, from 336 days in fiscal 2008 to 344 in fiscal 2009.

“[Federal agencies] must also improve the efficiency of the complaint process so that justice delayed is not justice denied,” Berrien said.

Of the 6,905 cases closed on the merits in fiscal 2009, 2.98 percent resulted in findings of unlawful discrimination. In addition, the parties entered into settlements in 3,394 complaints, or 21 percent of the total complaint closures.

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Vilsack Honors NRCS Employees

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack honored 16 Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) employees and an 11-member tribal organization in Wisconsin for exemplary service and achievement during the 62nd annual U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Honor Awards ceremony this week.

Vilsack honored Thomas Christensen, Regional Conservationist for NRCS's Central Region, for receiving a 2009 Presidential Rank Award-Meritorious Executive for demonstrated exceptional performance over an extended period. Christensen received the award for his accomplishments during his tenure as NRCS's Deputy Chief for Programs. In addition, 15 NRCS employees who worked for or assisted the agency's three Remote Sensing Laboratories (RSLs) received their award for management excellence.

“USDA's slogan “Every Day, Every Way” captures the incredible breadth and complexity of the impact that our employees make on the nation,” Vilsack said. “Today, I am proud to honor those employees who have gone above and beyond in their work to create prosperity and a better quality of life for the people that need it most. This year's awards reflect President Obama's and my priorities for USDA—conserving and restoring our nation's natural resources, promoting agricultural production, revitalizing rural communities, increasing food safety, and providing America's children with safe, nutritious and balanced meals.”

The RSLs—located in Greensboro, North Carolina; Fort Worth, Texas; and Portland, Oregon—were recognized for Management Excellence. When the RSLs were established in 2006, the use of contract employees was favored in support of outsourcing and reducing the size of government. In 2009, the labs, under the leadership of Sheryl Kunickis, designed and executed a plan to convert 84 contract positions to federal government positions under a very tight deadline. Their commitment and attention to detail resulted in the hiring of a skilled, flexible and diverse federal workforce at an annual savings of \$1.6 million compared with the contract cost. In addition, the labs delivered high quality service to their customers without interruption during the transition.

The following 15 individuals received Honor Awards:

- Teresa Evans, Human Resources Officer, Fort Worth, Texas
- Karen Garner, Administrative Officer, Fort Worth, Texas
- James Gillum, Leader, West Remote Sensing Laboratory, Portland, Oregon
- Yvette Gray, Human Resources Director, Washington, D.C.
- Rafael Guerrero, Leader, Central Remote Sensing Laboratory, Fort Worth, Texas
- Karen Holcomb, Office Assistant, Portland, Oregon
- Alicia Jolly, Human Resources Assistant, Fort Worth, Texas
- Sheryl Kunickis, Director, Remote Sensing Laboratories, Beltsville, Maryland
- Yvonne Legg, Office Assistant, Fort Worth, Texas
- Rublyn (Michelle) Lewis, Human Resources Specialist, Fort Worth, Texas
- Sonja Norman, Human Resources Specialist, Fort Worth, Texas
- Javier Ruiz, Leader, East Remote Sensing Laboratory, Greensboro, North Carolina
- Thomas Stredney, Human Resources Specialist, Fort Worth, Texas
- Vera Thomas, Office Assistant, Greensboro, North Carolina
- Judith Weber, Supervisory Contract Specialist, Fort Worth, Texas



Javier Ruiz (center), Leader of the East Remote Sensing Laboratory in Greensboro, NC, holds the USDA Honor Award he received from Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack (left) and Pearlle

Reed, Assistant Secretary for Administration. Ruiz accepted the award for Management Excellence on behalf of group leader Sheryl Kunickis.

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Scholarships for Minority Women

Actuary Scholarships for Minority Students (<http://www.beanactuary.org/>)

American Chemical Society Scholarships
(http://www.cnetweb.org/american_chemical_society_scholarships.htm)

American Geological Institute Minority Geosciences Student Scholarship
(<http://www.agiweb.org/mpp/index.html>)

American Political Science Association Minority scholarship list
(http://www.apsanet.org/content_11666.cfm)

Barbara Jordan Health Policy Scholars Program (<http://kff.org/about/jordanscholars.cfm>)

Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation (<https://www.coca-colascholars.org/cokeWeb/>)

Engineering for Minorities (<http://www.nacme.org/>)

International Education Financial Aid (<http://www.iefaf.org/>)

Jack Kent Cook Foundation Graduate Scholars Program
(<http://www.jackkentcookefoundation.org/>)

Kaiser Media Internships in Health Reporting (<http://kff.org/mediafellows/mediainternships.cfm>)

LGBT Scholarships (<http://www.leaguefoundation.org/>)

Microsoft Scholarships (http://www.microsoft.com/college/ss_reqs.aspx)

Morris K. Udall Undergraduate Scholarship (<http://www.udall.gov/>)

National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent Grant (SMART Grant)
(<http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/NewPrograms.jsp>)

Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
(<http://www.naspa.org/programs/nufp/default.cfm>)

Students of Color Scholarship (<http://www.financialaid4you.com/index.php/home>)

Unmet Need Scholarship
(http://www.thesalliemaefund.org/smfnew/scholarship/Unmet_need.html)

USA Funds (http://www.usafunds.org/planning/access_to_education_scholarship/index.html)

Scholarships for African -American Women (<http://www.naacpldf.org/content.aspx?article=35>)

Ron Brown Scholarship (<http://www.ronbrown.org/>)

Black Excel Scholarship Gateways (<http://www.blackexcel.org/>)

Congressional Black Caucus Foundation (<http://www.cbcfinc.org/>)

Dr. James M. Rosin Scholarship (<http://www.uncf.org/>)

Fisk Premedical Summer Institute / Minority Medical Education Program (<http://www.uncf.org/>)

General Mills Technology Scholars Award (<http://www.uncf.org/>)

Law School: MCCA Lloyd M. Johnson, Jr. Scholarship Program (<http://www.uncf.org/>)

National Black Police Association (<http://www.blackpolice.org/>)

National Society of Black Engineers Scholarship List
(<http://national.nsbe.org/Programs/Scholarships/tabid/84/Default.aspx>)

Sallie Mae Fund American Dream Scholarship
(http://www.thesalliemaefund.org/smfnew/scholarship/american_dream.html)

Siemens Teacher Education Scholarship Program (<http://www.uncf.org/>)

Spieler, Rhea and Louis Scholarship Program (<http://www.uncf.org/>)

UNCF Merck Science Initiative (<http://www.uncf.org/Merck/>)

United Negro College Fund (<http://www.uncf.org/forstudents/scholarship.asp>)

Scholarships for Latina Women

Hispanic Scholarship Fund (<http://www.hsf.net/>)

Adelante US Education Leadership Fund (http://www.adelantefund.org/adelante/Default_EN.asp)

Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (<http://www.chci.org/>)

First in My Family Scholarship Program
(http://www.thesalliemaefund.org/smfnew/scholarship/first_family.html)

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (<http://www.hacu.net/>)

Hispanic Internship Program (<http://www.hnip.net/>)

Salvadoran American Leadership and Education Fund (<http://www.salef.org/salef/fulfilling.html>)

State Farm Hispanic Scholarship Fund
(http://www.statefarm.com/about/part_spos/grants/hispanic.asp)

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SEPM Opportunities

The following SEPM-related National Bulletins were recently posted on the national [eDirectives Web site](#).

1. Collateral Duty National Black Emphasis Program Manager (BEMP) - closes Oct. 15, 2010
2. Collateral Duty National Asian American/Pacific Islander (AA/PI) Emphasis Program Manager - closes Oct. 29, 2010, 5 PM
3. Collateral Duty National Veterans Emphasis Program Manager (VEPM) - closes Oct. 30, 2010, 5 PM
4. Establish State, Area, Center, and Collateral Duty GLBT Emphasis Program Managers by end of this calendar year.

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Hispanic Heritage Month

From the early settlers of the New World to those reaching for the American dream today, Hispanics have shaped and strengthened our country. During National Hispanic Heritage Month, we pause to celebrate the immeasurable contributions these individuals have made to our Nation - from its inception to its latest chapters.

Reflecting the remarkable diversity of the American people, Hispanics represent a wide range of nationalities and backgrounds. Like so many Americans, Hispanics have overcome great obstacles to persevere and flourish in every sector of our society. With enduring values of faith and family, hard work and sacrifice, Hispanics have preserved the rich heritage of generations past while contributing mightily to the promise of our Nation for their children and grandchildren.

Hispanics are leaders in all aspects of our national life, from the Supreme Court and halls of Congress to boardrooms and Main Streets. Across America, Hispanics protect neighborhoods as police officers and first responders, guide young people as teachers and mentors, and boost economic growth as business owners and operators. As members of the Armed Forces, heroic Hispanic men and women have also fought and died to defend the liberties and security of the United States in every war since the American Revolution, many serving before becoming American citizens.

This month, we honor Hispanics for enriching the fabric of America, even as we recognize and rededicate ourselves to addressing the challenges to equality and opportunity that many Hispanics still face. In reflecting on our Nation's rich Hispanic heritage, let us take pride in our unique and vibrant history, and recommit to a shared future of freedom, prosperity, and opportunity for all.

To mark the achievements of Hispanics in the United States, the Congress, by Public Law 100-402, as amended, has authorized and requested the President to issue annually a proclamation designating September 15 through October 15 as “National Hispanic Heritage Month.”

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim September 15 through October 15, 2010, as National Hispanic Heritage Month.

I call upon public officials, educators, librarians, and all the people of the United States to observe this month with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this fifteenth day of September, in the year of our Lord two thousand ten, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-fifth.

BARACK OBAMA

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Cultural Transformation Web Site

On October 15, 2010, the Department will launch the Cultural Transformation Web site at culturaltransformation.usda.gov. The site will be a place where you can find updates on accomplishments, messages from Secretary Vilsack, and activities in the field. Furthermore, you'll have a place where you're able to provide input around the five (5) key areas driving transformation, which are:

- Leadership
- Talent Management
- Employee Development
- Recruitment and Retention
- Customer Focus and Community Outreach

The site is a platform to create a dialogue among employees to share ideas, discuss topics and gain insights into how USDA is creating a new legacy through this important initiative. You will need to use your eAuthentication (eAuth) account to access the Cultural Transformation Web site.

Please click here, culturaltransformation.usda.gov to be welcomed to the site by the chair of USDA's Cultural Transformation Initiative, Dr. Alma C. Hobbs, and deputy assistant secretary for administration. The discussion will start with Secretary Vilsack answering the questions, “What does cultural transformation mean to you?”

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