

NSO Contact

National Staff Organization

2011 NSO RA—Issue 3

New business items address threats, codes of conduct, training

Delegates debated six new business items at the 2011 Representative Assembly and approved four of them.

To deal with existing and potential threats in state affiliates, there must be an organizing structure and budget for each affiliate. A new business item charges the NSO Merger Organizing Committee and Coordinated Bargaining Councils with establishing and supporting Affiliate Standing Organizing Committees. This will be just one of many ways NSO will help state affiliates meet the challenges and attacks before them.

In her report to the RA, Lynn Adler, Vice President for Program, noted that she is receiving more and more requests from state affiliates for training to deal with internal issues. An RA new business item directs NSO to encourage members to honor Codes of Conduct when working within an affiliate and with other affiliates. NSO has a model Code of Conduct which many affiliates have already put into place to promote solidarity and productive working relationships. NSO will be posting the model on its Web site.

The NSO represents all state affiliates and the U.S. map within its symbol signifies that. However, a new business item adopted by the RA will change that map so it includes Alaska and Hawaii—an oversight needing attention.

Like its affiliates, NSO is facing a turnover in its membership with an anticipated rush of retirements in the near future. To address the need for a smooth transition to new leaders, RA delegates adopted a new business item which calls for the creation of a Future Leader Initiative as part of a plan to insure the solidarity of NSO.

An important new business item was tabled to be brought before the 2012 RA. A proposed change to the Constitution to establish an additional Executive Committee seat for an active NSO Retired member sparked debate. Since many retirees are working on behalf of NSO doing arbitrations, processing ULPs, providing on-site bargaining and/or crisis assistance, and serving as advocates for members, it was recommended that such a position be created to give retirees a greater voice in the organization. Questions regarding the cost of adding another Executive Committee position and the extent of the position's power were raised and need further research.



RA delegates debate new business items.

Twelve years later — a story of solidarity

NSO member Connie Comeaux from Arkansas learned the meaning of solidarity right before Thanksgiving 1999. She was living alone in Florida dealing with breast cancer. She was broke and wondering how she was going to pay her rent.

Solidarity came in the form of a package full of checks amounting to \$1,000 with a note of encouragement from fellow breast cancer survivor and Montana NSO member, Maggie Copeland.

Fast forward to the 2011 RA when Connie took a point of personal privilege to share her story and thank Maggie in person for her generosity, her humanity and her embodiment of solidarity.

Solidarity—it's what keeps us strong.



Maggie Copeland and Connie Comeaux reconnect at the RA.

First-time delegates could be the change we want to see

It's certainly appropriate that NSO President Chuck Agerstrand characterized the group of first-time RA delegates as a "wonderful sea of change" since the Assembly this year was convened in San Diego. But that description held a deeper meaning.

The "sea" of delegates swept in from all across the country—Idaho, New Jersey, Illinois, Massachusetts and Oregon.

And the reasons why those first-time delegates chose to run for a delegate position may represent the "change" that the anti-union sentiment sweeping the country is bringing to our mission as NSO members.

Sean McKillop from North Carolina talked about how difficult staff bargaining is in his state as motivation for coming to the RA.

"I want to talk to others for advice on how to deal with our bargaining situation. I know we're not alone so I can learn from their experiences."

Several first-time delegates are adding NSO RA to their previous NEA and state RA attendance.

"I've never experienced our own staff RA and I wanted this opportunity. I've been to the NEA RA and our state RA but this is more relevant to me as a staff person," said DeShaunta Kearns from Texas.

Lynn Adler, Vice President for Program briefed the first-time delegates on RA events and parliamentary procedures. She also introduced members of the Executive Committee.

Ready to experience her first NSO RA, it was Jamie Merritt from California who voiced what probably is the sentiment of every delegate, "I'm here to make a difference in my union."

NSO represented at Haymarket monument rededication

May 1, 2011 marked the 125th anniversary of the Haymarket tragedy and the restoration and rededication of the monument at Chicago's Forest Home Cemetery.

Considered to be the most revered shrine to labor, the Illinois Labor History Society raised money for the restoring and the upkeep of the monument. NSO contributed \$2,000 to the project.

"The rededication ceremony was very moving. It drove home the point that only by standing together will we stop the attacks on labor and the middle class," said Lynn Adler, NSO Vice President for Program who attended the rededication.

The Haymarket tragedy occurred on May 4, 1886 in Chicago's Haymarket Square when policemen fired on supporters of the Eight-Hour Day Movement. In the midst of the chaos, someone threw a bomb. Four workers and seven policemen were killed.

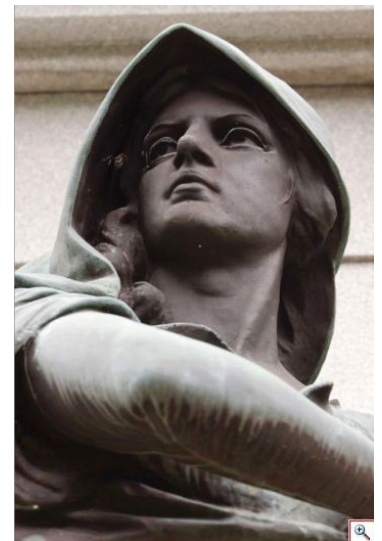
At stake were issues of freedom of speech, freedom of the press, the right to free assembly, the right to a fair trial by a jury of peers and the right of workers to organize and fight for things like the eight-hour day.

As union members we are still fighting for some of those issues today. That's why the words engraved on the monument still have meaning: "The day will come when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you are throttling today."

For more information on the Haymarket tragedy and monument, go to www.illinoislaborhistory.org.



New delegates to the RA are prepped on procedures by NSO President Chuck Agerstrand.



Sign up for the annual NSO Cruise!

Join other NSO members for a seven-day Caribbean cruise following NSO's Winter Advocacy Retreat on Carnival's *Glory*.

The ship leaves Miami Feb. 5 with stops at Cozumel, Grand Cayman Island and Isla Roatan and returns to Miami on Feb. 12. Cabin prices range from \$320 per person to \$620 per person. Port charges and taxes are \$257.69 per person for all cabins.

A \$25 per person refundable deposit is due by July 8.

Contact Lois Tarr at 201-788-3091 for details.



NSO Executive Committee: (First Row, L-R) Tom Greene, At-Large B; Ron Goldenstein, Treasurer; Catherine Alexander, Reg. 7; Lynn Adler, Vice-President for Program; Emmitt Jimmar, Reg. 3; Chuck Agerstrand, President; Kathy Hill, Reg. 5; Robert Blackwell, At-Large A; Marius Ambrose, Vice President for Defense; Butch Santicola, Reg. 2 **(Back Row, L-R)** John Stephens, Reg. 4; Mary Henson, Secretary; Michael Coleman, Reg. 6; Cheryl Singleton, Reg. 1

Check out the web site,
www.nationalstaff.org for the latest news
 and updates on bargaining.