

LABOR-MANAGEMENT FORUM RECEIVES SECRETARY'S HONOR AWARD

On September 14, 2011, the Secretary of Agriculture, Thomas J. Vilsack, presented the Secretary's Honor Award to the USDA Labor-Management Forum, formally recognizing the Forum's continuing efforts to improve the delivery of government services through labor-management cooperation. Chartered under Presidential Executive Order 13522, the Forum's accomplishments since it was formed a year-and-a-half ago include:

- Establishment of metrics to measure improvements in mission accomplishment, employee morale, and the labor-management relationship;
- Forum involvement in the revision of numerous Department-wide policies of high importance to USDA employees and the Secretary's Cultural Transformation Initiative. Examples include Referral Bonus Awards, Telework, Employment of Veterans, Advances in Pay, Administrative Leave, Employees Awards and Recognition, Drug Free Workplace, Employment of Individuals with Disabilities, and Premium Pay;
- Exercising oversight over the establishment of 40 subordinate Agency-level forums;
- Cooperating on the development of recommendations as part of the Strengthening Services Project;
- Working together on the threatened government shutdown; and
- Collaboration on the offering of earlyout and buyout opportunities.

Members of the USDA Labor Management Forum are grateful for all the cooperation given at the Department and Agency levels by unions, managers, and employees over the last 18 months to begin moving the labor-management relationships from confrontation to cooperation. Although it is a cliché, it is true that we have much more work to do. The recognition given to the USDA Forum by the Secretary's Honor Award will serve as added incentive as we move together into an even more challenging future.

USDA LABOR-MANAGEMENT FORUM HONOREES



Labor Management Forum Honorees William P. Milton, Jr. and Debra Arnold (seated). Standing (from L to R), are Phil Short, Sharon Cooney-Smith, Chuck Myers, Ron James, Rick Swenson, Ralph Linden, Eloris Speight, Jim Bradley, Ted Gutman (for Joanne Munno), Melissa Baumann, Luke Chesek, Henry Schmick, and Patricia Maggi. (Not pictured: Sharon Church, Ina Fells, Robin Heard, Stan Painter, Steven Placek, Sarah Rehberg, Mark Rucker, Ron Thatcher, Tony Thompson, Clyde Thompson, Bryan Knowles, and Dan Kline.)

USDA LABOR-MANAGEMENT FORUM

BULLETIN

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The responsibility of the USDA Labor-Management Forum is to oversee Presidential Executive Order 13522 that directs Federal agencies to actively partner with employee labor organizations and to engage the national unions in pre-decisional involvement (PDI) on Department-wide issues.



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USDA LABOR- MANAGEMENT FORUM

THE STRENGTHENING SERVICES PROJECT

A primary function of the USDA Labor Management Forum is to provide a venue for unions representing USDA employees to engage in “pre-decisional involvement in all workplace matters to the fullest extent practicable” as mandated by Executive Order 13522. One of the approaches to pre-decisional involvement (PDI) includes union representatives being selected to serve on management committees to provide union input to Agency decisions as those decisions are being formulated.

In response to budgetary pressures on the Department, Secretary Vilsack announced the initiation of the Strengthening Services Project (SSP) in early summer. In this project, the Secretary asked Agencies to envision how administrative services would be provided, if the USDA were re-created today. The Forum was briefed on this project, and shortly thereafter, union representatives at their request were appointed to each of the committees for the project that would be making recommendations to the Secretary. The union representatives served as full members of the committees. Although not all union ideas were incorporated into the options, the union representatives had the opportunity to raise union and employee issues early in the decision-making process. This is significantly different from traditional opportunities for union involvement where unions are afforded the opportunity for involvement only after Agency officials have already developed options and made decisions. As the SSP moves forward, the union officials will be invited to continue their involvement while remaining cognizant of their more traditional bargaining roles, once options are selected and implementation begins. Union participation on SSP committees was as follows:

STEERING COMMITTEES

Civil Rights

Debra S. Arnold, AFSCME 3870,
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Sharon Cooney-Smith, AFGE Local 3354,
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Information Technology

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Finance and Budget

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Lisa Randolph, AFGE Local 3354,
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Human Resources

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Chris Feutrier, NFFE Local 1697, cfeutrier@fs.fed.us

Homeland Security

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Tammy Daniels, AFSCME Local 3870,
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Procurement

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Luke Chesek, NTEU National Office,
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Property Management

Sean Britto, AFSCME Local 3020,
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Cervantiz Myrville, NTEU Chapter 226,
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CROSS-CUTTING COMMITTEES

Communications and Stakeholder Engagement

Patricia Carroll, AFGE 3354,
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Leon LaVigne, NFFE Local 2165, llavigne@fs.fed.us

Ways and Means

Angella Greaves, AFSCME 3976,
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Mark W Davis, NFFE Forest Service Council,
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Delegations of Authority

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Employee Locations

Connie Dupuis, NTEU Chapter 226,
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Renee Crawford, NFFE Local 1753,
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FORUM MEMBERS

Union:

Melissa Baumann - NFFE
Mark Davis - NFFE
Sharon Cooney-Smith - AFGE
Stan Painter - AFGE
Ina Fells - AFSCME
Debra Arnold - AFSCME
Luke Chesek - NTEU
Patricia Maggi - NTEU
Sharon Church—NAPPQOSE
Sarah Rehberg - NAAE
David Mergen - AFSA
Susan Johnson - AFSA

Management:

Robin Heard - Deputy Asst. Secy. for Administration
William P. Milton, Jr. - Chief Human Capital Officer
Lisa Baldus - Research Education & Economics
Ralph Linden - Office of the General Counsel
Lenise Lago - Natural Resources & the Environment
Joanne Munno - Marketing & Regulatory Programs
Steven Placek - National Appeals Division
Jonathan Alboum - Food, Nutrition and Consumer Svcs.
Eloris Speight - Natural Resources & the Environment
Philip Short - Farm & Foreign Agricultural Service
Lorena Carrasco - Food Safety
Clyde Thompson - Rural Development
Richard Swenson - Departmental Management
Ronald S. James - Labor Relations Officer