

N.A.A.E.

National Association of Agriculture Employees

NEWSLETTER



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National Association of Agriculture Employees

Newsletter Issue No. 81 September 2012



A Message From Our President

Sarah Rehberg

As I sit down once again to update everyone on the activities NAAE has been working on, I'm amazed at the number and scope of issues with which NAAE has been involved. It's easy to focus on the day to day activities and think it's been a pretty quiet 6 months but when I look to the big picture, it has been anything but quiet!

BAST

For those who haven't noticed, NOT is now BAST—not the worst acronym in the world, but the bast that they could do [I wouldn't like to be the “ARD” of that outfit!] Thanks to pre-decisional involvement (PDI), –see the APHIS Administrator's Award topic below– NAAE has embarked on a new relationship with the Professional Development Center. After several successful email discussions, we were given the opportunity to take it one step further. The PDC has completely reformulated the Basic Agricultural Safeguarding Training. This past April was the very first class with the new curriculum and Arlo Wiltenburg and I were able to attend. First off, Frederick has grown so much since I was at NOT that the town was unrecognizable. We had a great time being students, getting to know the students and testing our well-weathered PPQ knowledge. The new course is a blend of distance learning (before and after computer-based training) and classroom training. While some topics stayed the same (nursery stock is still the nursery stock we all remember) others are new with new approaches that provide more simulations and it all ends with a final simulation project that pulled all the concepts learned throughout the training together (unfortunately we couldn't stay for the final project because it overlapped with the Convention). We used compliance agreements, and set up a Japanese beetle trapping program, and wrote officer statements for IES. Throughout the process we were able to provide feedback on what part of the training worked and ideas for improving the training. We walked away with a good understanding of the changes to the training program. We also think that the PDC was able to gain valuable insight from us.

For more information on the new BAST, check out the syllabus and sample schedule on the PDC's intranet site:

http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/pdc/scitech/basic_agric_safe_train.shtml

Convention

The 2012 National Convention took place in April in Savannah, Georgia. Victor Zeno, our Convention Chairperson once again did a wonderful job of pulling all this together and it was a great success. My favorite part of the convention is seeing people come together, laugh and talk and learn and ask questions. It reminds me once again exactly why I'm involved with the union. Kim Mann, NAAE General Counsel and Peter Brownell, Western Region (Western Hub?) Labor Relations Specialist provided joint labor management training and this year Robi Maple, Eastern Region Labor Relations Specialist was added into the mix as a presenter. We had an excellent turn out from management, including Frank King, APHIS Labor Relations Chief; Mike Lidsky, Special Assistant to the Deputy Administrator; Sherry Sanderson, WR ARD; Carlos Martinez, ER ARD; Bill Wade, PDC Director; and Dawn Wade, Senior Training Specialist. In addition, Osama El-Lissy, Assistant Deputy Administrator, participated by phone and gave us a presentation on the uncertain status of the budget. Our consultation with upper-level management produced no major surprises: the budget isn't good (as we already knew) and not a lot about its impact is known at this time. The consultation was a great opportunity to touch base on a number of issues. At convention time, the reorganization for PPQ had yet to be fleshed out (not that the reorganization process has gotten much further along now) but we did get to learn a lot about training. Dawn Wade provided multiple handouts and significant insight into the changes that have occurred with training. Basically, PDC staff is working on a blended training approach with more flexibility in training courses so that the concepts that apply to multiple positions are available to multiple positions rather than set training per specific position. Training now includes core training- that which is essential for all new employees and electives that can be selected based on job requirements.

Mark Segall, longtime NAAE safety representative (he's our representative on the APHIS Safety Council and on the WR Safety Committee and our go-to guy for all things safety; he's also an identifier and our representative on the PISWG) gave a presentation on various safety issues. Mike Randall covered highlights and gems from the Green Book, the nick-name for our new collective bargaining agreement.

At the convention, I provided a summary report of all the activities that NAAE has been involved in since the previous convention. Putting a number on issues is tricky, because some are easy and some are very involved and time consuming, but in trying to capture how much busier NAAE has been under the Labor Management Relations Executive Order, I had to use numbers. What I found was since fiscal year 2011, I was involved predecisionally in at

least 42 issues (and I have a poor filing system so am sure there are more that I knew about and filed somewhere else and more that I didn't know about), and we received official notice on 41 changes to working conditions. So what is my point? Our involvement with issues doubled. In fact, with participation on the USDA Forum and the PPQ Forum, it more than doubled. This has been quite an opportunity to effect big-picture issues that impact you, the Agency, and its mission.

Contract

Nationally we have been working on coordinating a review of all of the local (branch) agreements. As some of you are all too aware, many local branches were stuck with old, pre-split with CBP, local contracts. With the completion of the Green Book came the opportunity to "reopen" all local agreements, and renegotiate them. Some locations chose to toss their local contract and follow the Green Book. Some only needed agreements on overtime and annual leave procedures, and others are working on full local contract renegotiations. This has been quite a task both locally and nationally to coordinate. We aren't done yet, but are getting there, and when completed we will have a finalized list of all local agreements in existence. There are some allowances in the Green Book for local contracts and local agreements. If you have an issue that you want to address with a local agreement, please contact your regional VP for guidance.

APHIS Administrator's Award

This year the Secretary of Agriculture's Honor Awards added a new category, Labor-Management Collaboration. The PPQ Forum was nominated for this category. While the PPQ Forum was not selected for the Collaboration award, the Forum did receive the APHIS Administrator's Award. APHIS Labor Relations Chief Frank King received the award at the ceremony in Riverdale in September for the Forum. Frank wrote an excellent summary of the Forum's activities for the nomination and I'm printing it here below. I know we've talked about the Forum's activities, but it's impressive to see it all pulled together in one place.

This nomination supports the Secretary's Honor Award for Labor Management Collaboration by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Plant Protection & Quarantine (PPQ) Forum. The PPQ Forum is a model of success for cooperative and productive relations between management and labor unions. The parties work hard to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust through open communications on any proposed change or idea. This work has resulted in a decrease in the number of formal grievances and an increase in employee satisfaction based on the Labor Management survey results.

The PPQ Forum consists of three PPQ management officials, two APHIS labor relations specialist and eight union representatives from two separate unions; the National Association of Agriculture Employees (NAAE) and the National Association of Plant Protection & Quarantine Office Support Employees (NAPPQOSE). This Forum was created based on Executive Order 13522.

One of the primary successes of the PPQ Forum is through pre-decisional involvement (PDI) in which the parties openly share proposed ideas and changes in advance of final decisions, answer questions in the early planning stages or modify original proposals to include suggested changes from the unions. The PPQ Forum provided 92 PDI opportunities from August 2010 to April 2012. One example of this collaboration was the implementation of revised telework policies. The Agency provided policy drafts in the early stages of discussion, as well as a subject matter expert on several conference calls. After all the questions were addressed, the Agency was able to implement the new changes without formal bargaining. Following the implementation, the parties jointly crafted a Q&A document which was distributed to all PPQ field employees and is now available in the Human Resources Desk Guide. The full list of PDI opportunities negotiated during this period can be found at the end of this nomination.

PPQ Forum participants followed the guidance from the USDA Forum and attended joint training in August 2010 as well as met face-to-face in February 2011. While at the face-to-face meeting, the group jointly participated in training provided by the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service FMCS Commissioner. These meetings/trainings provided a collaborative space for the parties to work together. 2011 accomplishments included defining PDI expectations, creating a Charter and metrics, developing a training survey, and establishing a Forum web site where the Charter, survey results, membership minutes, training materials and links are easily accessible.

The improved relationship and trust between the parties has also reduced the number of grievances and unfair labor practices, as the parties openly request assistance from one another in an informal manner, with the expectation that the issues will be reviewed and handled properly. In 2011, there were 16 grievances filed, with all grievances resolved or withdrawn without any appeals to arbitration.

The Forum worked together on several key collaborations that allowed delivery of the highest quality services to PPQ employees.

1. Improved training and training opportunities by assessing current training needs of employees. A committee designed a 14 question survey covering demographics, position-related training, employee development, training opportunities, training methods/media, and miscellaneous training. This anonymous survey was sent to PPQ employees in April 2011 with a total of 437 responses returned. A 42 page summary of findings and recommendations was drafted and approved by the Forum and shared with the employees through the Forum web site.
2. Delivered a joint presentation by NAAE representatives and PPQ management of a 24 part webinar series on the new Collective Bargaining Agreement to approximately 800 managers and union representatives. This collaborative effort not only allowed supervisors and union representatives to hear the same message from their National Leaders as to the intent and expectations of the agreement but saved APHIS nearly \$900,000 by utilizing the webinar format instead of in-person training.

3. Improved communication and business practices between the APHIS Eastern and Western regions. This committee's objective was to evaluate the different practices between the regions, identify best practices and eliminate steps/processes that were not efficient. Most issues submitted were related to administrative processes and as a result this committee ultimately merged with the administrative committee; therefore, improving PPQ administrative employee's satisfaction with their individual work circumstances. The administrative committee solicited templates and training presentations from the field and regional office. 47 separate documents or templates for submitted for consideration and 14 documents were finalized for release including Q&A's for GOV's, aids for web/TA and GovTrip.

The overall success of the PPQ Forum is shown through the USDA Labor-Management online survey results from 2010 to 2011. The results showed improvements in each of the following elements.

	2010	2011
Information Sharing	3.02	3.40
Effectiveness of Bargaining	3.32	3.65
Dispute Resolution	3.45	3.63
Organizational Support	3.23	3.57
Issue Resolution	3.45	3.57

The Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Plant Protection & Quarantine (PPQ) Forum is a model of success for cooperative and productive relations between management and labor unions. By creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust through open communications on proposed changes or ideas, the Forum was able to reduce the number of grievances and increase employee satisfaction.

The Forum worked throughout 2011 on several collaborations that allowed delivery of high quality services to PPQ employees:

- Created 92 opportunities for pre-decisional involvement (PDI)
- Shaped a Charter and metrics
- Established a Forum website
- Assessed training needs, developed & implemented recommendations
- Delivered a joint NAAE/PPQ 24 part webinar series to 800 employees
- Improved communications and administrative business processes
- Saved the Agency approximately \$900,000 by utilizing webinar technology to train employees

The PPQ Forum is comprised of representatives from NAAE (myself, Mike Randall, Jim Triebwasser and Arlo Wiltenburg), National Association of Plant Protection and Quarantine Office Support Employees (NAPPQOSE) (Doreen Lewis, Cynthia Ross, Sophia Tutein and Jane Droke), Labor Relations (Frank King and Peter Brownell) and PPQ Management (Mike Lidsky, Carlos Martinez and Sherry Sanderson). For more information on the PPQ Forum check out our intranet site:

<http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/LaborManagement/index.shtml>

SITC

NAAE has been involved, through PDI, since the beginning with the SITC Board of Advisors. PDI however, is confidential, so while NAAE was unable to share, know that we had been involved and will continue to look out for the best interests of the SITC Officers. While all in SITC are now aware, the rest of PPQ hasn't exactly been notified officially, that SITC, like other programs (ALB, EAB) will be going under the SPHD structure at the start of the next fiscal year. At this point, that, while a big one, is the only change. In future SITC Officers may be tasked with non-SITC PPQ work; however there are several steps that must come before that. Those SITCOs will have to be under a new blended Position Description, and that PD isn't completed yet. SITCOs will need training; the Board, PPQ, and NAAE are all on the same page in that employees will not be tasked with duties for which they have not been trained. Let us know if you find yourself in this situation, we can help.

EAB

As reported in the last newsletter, the Emerald Ash Borer program is going to be cut away to almost nothing in FY13. When this process started, there were 14 permanent PHSSs in the program. Through the voluntary reassignment process 5 PHSSs were in a position to transfer and they have already done so. Since the transfer process, 5 others have been accommodated in their home states, for at least the next fiscal year. One has since found another job with USDA locally and will be transferring. And so, we have 3 dedicated, experienced PHSSs who will be offered directed reassignments, but most likely will be forced to resign. These specialists will be missed and we hope they are able to find their way back to PPQ in the future.

Executive Committee

NAAE has recently made some additions to the Executive Committee that we're happy to share and hope this expansion will help members increase their ability to get assistance. Thanks to the Green Book, NAAE now has more official time available for representation activities, and so we have added two new members to assist the Regional Vice Presidents. One is Kathy Ortega, a SITC Officer in Commerce, CA. Kathy was first introduced to PPQ when she started working on a cooperative state/county/federal med-fly program in the early 90s. She then spent 8 years in the port of Long Beach before switching over to SITC. The second is Paul Hodges, a PHSS in Kenner, LA. Paul started with the federal government in 1989 with FGIS and then came to PPQ in 1995 in New Orleans. He spent 3 years with CBP and then made his way back. Paul has been involved with the union locally for years as a local executive committee member and is the current local president. Even though he's in the Western Region, he will largely be working on Eastern Region issues. Paul's and Kathy's contact information has been added to the website and is also on the last page of the newsletter. Please contact them! At one time, NAAE had

four Regional VPs (when PPQ had four regions). In 2004 the National by-laws were updated to include Customs and Border Protection and NAAE changed the RVP structure to two VPs for PPQ and four for CBP. We have not adjusted the by-laws since and so have been operating with two RVPs. Unfortunately there is just too much work for two people. The by-laws allow the NAAE Executive Committee to increase or decrease the size of its membership, but because these additional positions were not elected positions, the NAAE Executive Committee felt that it should err on the side of caution and make them non-voting positions. At some point soon, we hope to update the by-laws, and when we do, the membership will vote on it.

Uniforms

NAAE has recently made a change to the Uniform Committee; Victor Zeno will be replacing Marjorie Bestwick as the Eastern Region NAAE Representative. Marjorie started with the Uniform Committee at a very difficult time, when the contract was falling apart. It's no secret that it hasn't been going well with Lion Apparel. Marjorie did an amazing job addressing employee concerns and relaying them to the Committee. Those of us that have never served on the committee often don't realize that the committee never hears how much employees love the uniform, it's always complaints. It's extremely frustrating to not be able to fix those issues. NAAE cannot thank her enough.

Victor is a domestic technician in Sanford, Florida with the fruit fly program. He has been actively involved in his local branch since it was created and has served twice as our National Convention Coordinator. He was our NAAE representative working on the Technician Training Assessment conducted by the PDC.

So, for employees in the Eastern Region, please send your uniform comments, concerns and questions to Victor Zeno at Victor.Zeno@aphis.usda.gov and for Western Region employees contact Tim Cassidy at Timothy.M.Cassidy@aphis.usda.gov.

A Primer on Agency's Post-Accident Drug-Testing Program: A Recipe for Chaos, Confusion, and Abuse

Kim Mann, NAAE General Counsel

PPQ employees, like all federal employees, are subject to drug testing as a condition of their employment. Starting with President Reagan's Executive Order in 1986 and then federal legislation in 1987 implementing the E.C., the right of the employer to drug test its employees has been extended to the federal sector, subject to numerous limitations, restrictions, and conditions intended to protect the constitutional and privacy rights of federal employees.

USDA adopted its own drug and alcohol testing policy to carry out the congressional mandate, creating a Department-wide drug-free workplace program. It requires drug testing of USDA employees occupying or applying for safety- and security-sensitive positions (referred to as "Designated Testing Positions," or "DTP" for short). Few if any PPQ bargaining unit members occupy DTPs. DTP employees are subject to random and new-applicant drug testing. All PPQ employees are subject to reasonable-suspicion (of drug/alcohol use) and post-accident drug testing under the USDA policy when the conditions spelled out in the policy are met.

The aftermath of a recent serious automobile accident involving a PPQ employee in a GOV, substantial property damage, and personal injuries illustrates the confusion and misunderstanding surrounding post-accident drug testing within USDA/APHIS/PPQ. The remainder of this article analyzes the Department and Agency criteria that must be met before NAAE bargaining unit employees may be required to undergo drug testing following an automobile accident.

USDA's most recent iteration of its "Drug Free Workplace Program" appears in USDA Department Regulation 4430-792-2, dated April 14, 2011. See http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DR4430-792-2_Final_Approved.pdf. DR 4430 deals with post-accident testing on pages 18-20. There it states:

All Employees. Employees may be subject to testing when, based upon the circumstances of an accident, their actions are reasonably suspected of having caused or contributed to an accident that results in a death or personal injury requiring immediate hospitalization, or results in damage to government or private property estimated to be in excess of \$10,000.

In other words, the Agency may not order drug (or alcohol) testing of any USDA employee unless (1) a manager reasonably suspects the employee "caused or contributed to" the accident **and** (2) the accident resulted in either (a) a death or personal injury requiring hospitalization or (b) property damage in excess of \$10,000. The formula is simple: no employee fault, no testing; no personal injury or property damage exceeding \$10,000, no testing.

But that's not all. DR 4430 goes on to impose a third requirement. All authorized post-accident drug testing must be conducted "within 32 hours of the accident." (Alcohol testing must be completed within two hours of the accident.) It uses the words "must be completed." Why? Because, according to DR 4430, "certain drugs stay in a person's system for a limited time." DR 4430 does provide one very narrow exception: "If this is not done [within the prescribed time limits], documentation as to why the test was not accomplished must be provided to the Agency Head and the DFWP ["Drug Free Workplace"] Manager."

DR 4430 also tightly controls required documentation of the basis asserted for conducting drug testing in a post-accident scenario. The supervisor who "reasonably suspects" the employee caused/contributed to the accident must first present the facts and circumstances "leading to and supporting this suspicion" to a designated "Mission Personnel Officer [or delegated Personnel Officer] for approval." After obtaining approval and arranging for testing, that supervisor must prepare a written report "detailing the facts and circumstances that warranted the testing." Again, another simple formula: no presentation of facts/circumstances supporting suspicion of employee fault, no testing; no upper-management approval, no testing; no written report detailing facts/circumstances warranting testing, no testing. In fairness, DR 4430 is not clear as to whether, following approval to test, that testing must await the supervisor's preparation of the required written report containing the justification for testing.

Post-accident drug testing of USDA employees would be relatively straightforward and doubt-free, at least procedurally, under the formulaic USDA policy, DR 4430, if it were not for the fact that USDA's Marketing and Regulatory Programs (or "MRP" as it is known) has its own Drug-Free Workplace Program, styled "Handbook." It appears as MRP 4792. See <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/library/manuals/pdf/workplace.pdf>. Appendix F to MRP 4792 contains a "Fact Sheet," prepared June 17, 2010, addressing post-accident drug testing. There, mucking up the waters is the following guidance from MRP: post-accident testing must be conducted within 32 hours if the resulting property damage exceeds \$10,000, a fatality has occurred, or "medical treatment is sought by any of the accident/incident victims." The MRP 4792 Handbook, in adopting these three-part either-or criteria, omits any mention of the need for the medical treatment to require hospitalization. More startling is its omission of a reference to any requirement that the USDA/APHIS/PPQ employee be reasonably suspected of causing or contributing to the accident as a condition precedent to drug testing.

The MRP 4792 Handbook does clarify the agency-specific procedures to be followed, including to whom the supervisor must submit "information" and from whom he/she must obtain approval to test. It is, according to the Handbook Fact Sheet, the MRP Personnel Officer who approves testing but only after reviewing information collected from the supervisor, the Employee Relations Specialist, and the "Agency Drug Testing Liaison."

Adding to the confusion generated by the conflicting criteria for post-accident testing found in DR 4430 and MRP 4792 is yet another MRP publication, MRP 5400, the Motor Vehicle Manual, dated June 20, 2007. See http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/publications/motor_vehicle_manual/download-ads/motor_vehicle_manual.pdf. In it, at pages 36-37, the MRP 5400 Manual details the procedures a supervisor must follow in the wake of a known automobile accident. It directs the supervisor to report to various agency program heads and safety and health officials four defined types of “serious accidents,” including job-related accidents when the claim “is expected to exceed \$20,000” and accidents indicating the MRP employee may have been negligent or guilty of misconduct. Thus, under the MRP 5400 Manual criteria, the automobile accident is not reportable unless either the property damage exceeds \$20,000 (not \$10,000 as DR 4430 and MRP 4792 specify) or the employee was negligent or guilty of misconduct (not merely the “cause” of the accident as DR 4430 provides or irrespective of the employee’s conduct as MRP 4792 provides).

Beyond specifying the supervisor’s accident reporting obligations, the MRP 5400 Manual also fixes the supervisor’s post-accident notification obligations. It directs the supervisor to notify the Drug Free Workplace Manager of the accident to determine whether post-accident testing is required, but only if either the property damage exceeds \$20,000 (not \$10,000) or the accident resulted in a death or hospitalization of someone in the accident. Notification of the DFWP Manager does not depend, according to MRP 5400, upon the part the employee may have played, if any, in causing or contributing to the accident. There is no apparent explanation of the internal inconsistency between the accident reporting paragraph of MRP 5400 and its accident notification paragraph, and none is evident.

Given the inconsistency of MRP’s publications governing post-accident drug testing, reporting, and notification and their inherent conflict with USDA’s Department Regulation, it is no wonder that PPQ managers and supervisors are confused about what to do when a serious automobile accident occurs involving a PPQ employee. This confusion is evident in how the Agency handled drug testing following the accident mentioned in the third paragraph of this article. The PPQ employee involved in the accident clearly was not at fault – his car was rear-ended, driving his smashed vehicle into the car stopped ahead of him – but the damage to the vehicles was very extensive, easily exceeding \$10,000, even \$20,000. The employee was hospitalized. According to what NAAE has been told, the employee was directed to submit to drug-testing based upon second-hand guidance originating with the Agency regional safety staff, without regard to “fault,” seizing instead upon the dollar amount of damage to the vehicles as the rationale for ordering testing. The order to test came so late, passed along to the employee by another bargaining unit member, that testing could not be accomplished until approximately 84 hours after the accident. The testing was never carried out, possibly because of the delayed timing, possibly because the test lab acknowledged losing the paperwork.

What source the PPQ manager turned to for guidance in this matter is not known to NAAE. It is unlikely to have been USDA DR 4430. To state the obvious, in my opinion, MRP needs to scrap the post-accident drug-testing chapters of MRP 4792 and MRP 5400 and start all over again. It must start with and follow USDA DR 4430. Drug testing is an intrusive, invasive procedure, violating the basic Fourth and Fifth Amendment rights of federal employees unless conducted in strict adherence to legal constraints imposed by the U.S. Constitution and the courts. APHIS/PPQ needs to reform its post-accident drug testing program to conform to those constitutional standards.

“Live Better. Work Union”

Barbara Hashioka, NAAE Local 63 Secretary, Los Angeles, CA

“Live Better. Work Union.” I remember seeing this phrase printed on red, white, and blue stickers on the bumpers or tailgates of many large-sized pickup trucks in past decades. Little by little over the years these stickers have been replaced on the vehicles I drive behind by stickers with “my child is student of the month at _____ school” printed on them or stick-figure cutouts representing the drivers’ family members. Living in California, I spend a lot of time stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic staring at the car in front of me. I remember years ago while serving on jury duty, one of the questions asked by the plaintiff’s lawyer to potential jurors was “what does the bumper stickers on your car say?” This lawyer understood what someone affixes to their car can give some insight into what is important to that person. So as this pro-union sticker has vanished from my view over the years, so have unions been losing their important presence in our society. And it is an important presence.

The recent Washington Post article, “What happens if America loses its unions”, by Harold Meyerson, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/what-happens-if-america-loses-its-unions/2012/06/12/gJQA1d7UYV_story.html) talks about how important unions are in preserving workers’ wages and benefits and how the decline of union membership and numbers has led to a noticeable increase in the economic gap of wealth in the USA. In Meyerson’s article, 1947-1972 was called the three decades of peak unionization in America. According to Meyerson, during these peak decades in the USA “productivity increased by 102% and median household income also increased by 102%.” But in these times of hard economic realities, private-sector unionization, once at a post-World War II high of about 40%, has dipped below 7%. With the diminished strength of unions today, “wages account for the lowest share of both gross domestic product and corporate revenue since World War II ended - and that share continues to shrink.”

Our union, the National Association of Agriculture Employees, started during this union heyday, when in 1952, the New York Plant Quarantine Club received an overwhelmingly positive response after polling all Federal Plant Quarantine Inspectors regarding the need for a national organization. On Saturday, May 1, 1954, in New York, originally under the name of the Federal Plant Quarantine Inspector's National Association (FQQINA), our union, the National Association of Agriculture Employees, officially started.

As in Meyerson's article, unions, and ours specifically, to me are important. The NAAE has different meanings to different members. To some, it is a professional association that promotes and enhances the image of its members. To others, it is a labor organization that provides a strong clear voice expressing the needs and concerns of the bargaining unit it represents. To me, the NAAE is also an organization of fellow workers who can provide insight, information, and support to members.

Unions, in general, are an added layer of protection, not unlike insurance. An important union protection is the Weingarten Rights. Under the Weingarten Rights, a union representative, if requested by the employee, can be present for a bargaining unit member who has been called to a meeting that this member believes could involve or result in disciplinary action or other adverse consequences for the member. What employees wouldn't want the option of having someone who has been trained and has the best interest of fellow workers like themselves next to them during these types of meetings? With union membership, you have voting rights to elect these representatives who maybe someday sitting next to you, supporting you, during these kinds of meetings.

Then again, you might be thinking, "I'm a good employee. That won't happen to me." Well, I think I am a decent driver, but my car was rear-ended this year by someone who blamed me for the accident even though my car was stopped in traffic. This person initially gave me his wrong required-by-law information until I asked to verify what he wrote down with his actual documents. You could be doing everything right and still something goes wrong. You can't account for all the variables in Human Nature and in Life. This is why there is insurance. This is why there are unions. Accidents do happen. If you drive, you'll probably have an accident the longer you are on the road. If you have an opinion, you'll probably have a disagreement during your lifetime. And that person you quarrel with might not even see your "point-of-view." They might even try to "block it."

And like insurance, if you don't have it or support it, it won't be there when you need it. By not supporting the union with membership, you're saying "I don't need the union." I would have car insurance even if it wasn't required by California state law because the potential for my loss is significant. I am a union member, not just because I believe it is the right thing to do, which I do, but because not having a union would be a significant loss, not just for me, but

for all my co-workers. For the cost of about a Starbucks mocha Frappuccino grande a week, union membership doesn't keep me up at night, but helps me sleep a little bit better. This is a small price for me to pay for peace of mind and to me peace of mind is priceless. What would it cost you if there was no union? Who would speak up for you? How would your work change? How would your workplace change? How would your life change? Would this be for the better?

“Live Better. Work Union.” I can honestly say my life is better because of our union and unions in general. It is hard to believe that our union turned 58 years old this year. In the 58 years of NAAE's existence there have been several major accomplishments and successful negotiations including Sunday double-time, reimbursable overtime, and most recently, “the Green Book.” As we look forward to NAAE's upcoming 60th anniversary, let us not plan for its retirement, but let us appreciate all that NAAE has provided us in the past and help keep NAAE strong in the future. And we are lucky that public-sector unions such as ours, as compared to private-sector unions, still have an influential presence in our country. It is sad to say that the public-sector may become the last strong bastion for unions with the way our country and the world is changing in the face of a global economy and financial hardship.

Yes, I hope I never see the day when unions become ‘extinct.’ Unions are important because they help provide ‘balance’ in our fragile ‘work ecosystem.’ We should all be ‘occupational environmentalists’ or ‘office ecologists’ and try to ‘save the unions.’ Just like a species, a union is only as strong as the number and kind who belong to it. Let's preserve equilibrium in the workplace, because like the loss of a species, we are all a little less of what we are and what we could be when we lose diversity in any form. So if the “Live Better, Work Union” bumper sticker has to fade from our sight, let's replace it with “Be Better. Join the Union”. Call it a “membership drive.”

Metrics- What are they and how are they used?

Jim Triebwasser, NAAE National Treasurer and PPQ Forum member

Metrics are used to measure program success in government and other arenas. Under the Clinton Executive Order on partnerships there were no metrics built in, so in the end, there was no way to measure its success. Learning from that, Obama's E.O. requires measurements and metrics so that the Forums can be evaluated. The PPQ Forum has set goals in their metrics to measure success of certain activities. The PPQ Forum is using an increase in the results of the Employee Viewpoint Survey (EVS) data as the measure. The element is "employee satisfaction".

NAAE would like help with suggestions on how to accomplish the increase in this section of the EVS. And more importantly, suggestions from you on what would improve satisfaction with your job.

Some suggestions already received include:

- Monthly or bi-monthly updates from the hubs on the status of PPQ's modernization efforts.
- Highlighting various PPQ employees or offices to create awareness across PPQ of the different facets of what we do.

NAAE has a great opportunity here to implement new ideas that benefit employees, but we need to think outside of the box. And unfortunately, there are some limitations on what we can do considering the current political and budgetary climate. So, while we all would like financial and career advancement, please keep that in mind. Send your thoughts, ideas and suggestions to me at: triebwas2000@yahoo.com.

THE END???

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**No! This is the beginning. We Have
Just Begun to Fight!
Now More Than Ever! Encourage Your Co-
Workers to Join! Strength In Numbers!**

YOUR NATIONAL NAAE REPRESENTATIVES
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WITHHOLDING FORMS TO NAAE NAT'L PRESIDENT FOR SIGNATURE

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This Newsletter is distributed to NAAE members & to members of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees

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