



OPEDA Newsletter

January 2012

2012 Elections

President

The next OPEDA presidential election is underway. Our current OPEDA President, Mr. Louis A. Iacoletti, will appoint a nominating committee comprised of at least three OPEDA members in good standing. If you would like to serve on the nominating committee, please let President Iacoletti know by January 31st, 2012. President Iacoletti can be contacted via the OPEDA Web Site at <http://\opedanet>

The Nominating Committee will present a slate of one or more candidates for the Presidency from the Washington, D.C. area to the OPEDA Council by March 2nd, 2012. The President is elected by the entire membership in a national election (Ballots will be sent out by mail to all members).

The next three-year term begins on July 1st, 2012. The OPEDA constitution limits the President to two consecutive terms. Mr. Iacoletti is serving his first term as OPEDA President and is eligible for reelection.

Council

As per the OPEDA Bylaws, each of the seven (7) OPEDA Regions (details are provided on Page 3 of this newsletter) elect their Region's Council Member for a term of three years beginning July 1st, 2012.

Within limits set by the Board, each Council Member whose term is expiring shall appoint a nominating committee within the Region to select one or more candidates for the Council position. Council member elections are normally accomplished concurrently with the Presidential election and placed on the same ballot.

A Message from Louis A. Iacoletti, OPEDA President



One of OPEDA's most essential functions over the years has been to be YOUR advocate – to protect YOUR compensation and benefits, and to ensure YOU receive appropriate recognition for your hard work and dedicated public service. OPEDA has been protecting the interests of its members in this way for over 82 years, since the Organization was established in 1929.

OPEDA is very active in protecting our members' interests, by working closely with our counterparts in other federal employee organizations and unions to help fend off unwarranted attempts to reduce the Federal budget at the expense of our Federal employees and annuitants. Misguided media and special interest groups, using misleading and in some cases inaccurate information, attempt to influence new legislation to reduce or eliminate our hard-earned Federal employee compensation and benefits. Although these efforts are always met with strong opposition, and normally have little to no chance of succeeding, they are having a negative impact on Federal employee morale, at a time when Federal Employees should be proud of their public service accomplishments.

OPEDA celebrates the vision, persistence, dedication, diversity and accomplishments of our USDA employees. Our USDA employees are integral to providing the agricultural resources our nation needs to function effectively. USDA employees DESERVE fair compensation and benefits and recognition for their public service accomplishments.

I am very proud of OPEDA's Work and accomplishments during recent years. We are making great progress in reestablishing OPEDA as the leader and primary proponent for protecting the rights of USDA employees and annuitants.

Serving as President of OPEDA has been both a privilege and an honor, and I hope to be able to continue to provide the leadership needed to build on the progress we have made during the next three years.

Through our dedicated volunteers who are working closely with the USDA leadership to pursue change and new opportunities for our members, we are rebuilding OPEDA into a modern organization, responsive to the changing needs of our members,

OPEDA Supports Employee Compensation Retention

OPEDA has been working with other employee organizations to communicate to members of Congress the importance of maintaining fair and equitable compensation and benefits for our members. (More detailed information concerning these communications can be found on our web site, <http://\opedanet>.)

OPEDA participates as a member of the Federal/Postal Coalition, an organization representing 4.3 Million Federal and Postal workers and retirees. The coalition has taken a leadership role in communicating with our Congressional representatives, leaders in the Executive Branch and chairs and members of various appointed commissions and committees that are seeking to reduce our nation's deficit. OPEDA is strongly opposed to any attempts to inappropriately reduce Federal

Volume XII, Issue 1

employee and retiree compensation and benefits.

The Federal Employees' Pay Comparability Act was passed in 1990. During the 1990's various panels and surveys showed that many federal positions were undercompensated relative to similar positions in the private sector. Repeated contacts with Government leaders were either ignored or answered by stating that we were in a national emergency and comparability was not possible "just now." It was widely known that some positions were undercompensated by as much as 30%-50%. While a few individuals in mostly clerical positions received slightly higher pay in some locations, we note that at the present time many of these positions have been phased out.

With the advent of the current federal deficit crisis, cries to reduce government spending are easily uttered. However, it is important that this cannot be accomplished on the backs of our Federal workforce. Most federal workers are still to this day underpaid by as much as 30-50%. This fact is supported by the observation that the annual incomes of many professionals outside the federal government exceed \$200,000 – a sort of benchmark for federal employees. In fact, legislation has been introduced to limit compensation for some contract employees, that make as much as \$700,000 per year or more.

It is for the foregoing reasons that OPEDA has joined forces with many other organizations of government employees to communicate and insist our legislators and government leaders at the federal level treat us fairly. OPEDA will continue to be a strong advocate to ensure that we are compensated fairly, preserving employee morale, so the Government continues to function efficiently and effectively.

Unsung Hero Award Program

The Unsung Hero program will begin accepting nominations in early-March, 2012. Unsung Hero Awards are given to our USDA employees who have demonstrated extraordinary effort in performing tasks enthusiastically; who have selflessly dedicated their time and expertise, and consistently and willingly extended a helping hand. Nomination forms will be due back in early April. Please check our web site <http://\opedanet> for updated information.



Hispanic Heritage Food Fiesta

On October 6th, 2011, OPEDA partnered with the USDA Employees Active in Transformation (EAT) Committee to host the 2nd Annual Hispanic Heritage Food Fiesta. Hundreds of USDA employees were present at this celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month.

Scholarship winners – 2011-2012

Sarah Arvaneh - Sarah is currently attending



Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine where she is pursuing her osteopathic medical degree. She is interested in becoming a plastic surgeon. When not studying, she enjoys swimming, running, playing piano, cooking with her Dad, catching up with friends, and watching football.

Samuel Arvaneh – Samuel is currently at-



tending the University of Maryland, College Park, and is pursuing a degree in kinesiology. He hopes to become a Physical Therapist after he completes his undergraduate and graduate school. He enjoys

playing football, lacrosse, reading, and spending time with friends and family.

Shelby Feistner - Shelby Feistner is a soph-



omore at the University of Missouri working toward a Bachelor's Degree in Journalism with an emphasis in Photojournalism. After she graduates, she plans on moving to the Pacific Northwest to work as a staff photographer for a newspaper or magazine. She also aspires to travel and work on documentary photography in various countries.



Shona Feistner – is a junior at the University of Arkansas. Her fields of interest are occupational therapy and kinesiology. She has volunteered extensively with young people; this work has included tutoring fifth grade students and working with the Girl Scouts of America.

Candice Seawright – Candice is a sophomore at Claflin University, Orangeburg, SC. Candice is an Elementary Education major and volunteers in her community.



Lianna

Fierroz – Lianna is a student at Gordon College, Barnesville GA. She plans to transfer to the Georgia Institute of Technology



and complete her BS in Computer Science at GA Tech by 2014. She plans to intern at an accounting firm and explore other activities such as cyber security, business, and policy analysis before entertaining any thoughts about graduate school.

Kale Matthew Stone - Kale graduated from Cair Paravel Latin School in Topeka, Kansas last spring. Kale currently attends Washburn University in Topeka, pursuing a degree in Civil Engineering and plans to transfer to Kansas State University next fall to finish his degree.



Kale currently attends Washburn University in Topeka, pursuing a degree in Civil Engineering and plans to transfer to Kansas State University next fall to finish his degree.

OPEDA Bids Farewell to Farook Sait

Mohammed Farook Sait, is a past President of OPEDA and of the Federal Asian Pacific American Council

Mr. Sait retired from his position as Director, Civil Rights Division for the Food Safety and Inspection Service on December 6th, 2011.

The local USDA Chapter of FAPAC sponsored a retirement ceremony for Mr. Sait on the patio of the Whitten Building.

On behalf of OPEDA President Iacoletti, who was on travel at the time of the ceremony, OPEDA Past President and Executive Director, Dr. Dora Hayes presented Mr. Sait with a special engraved crystal paperweight desk set during the festivities.

Dr. Hayes thanked Mr. Sait for his many years of service to USDA and OPEDA. She also wished him success in retirement.

Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) Program Changes Premium Rates

The Office of Personnel Management has announced the following life insurance premium rate changes effective January 1, 2012. Changes will impact Option B (Additional) and Option C (family) coverage, and Post-Retirement Basic Insurance (for annuitants only).

- All Option B age bands (except ages 75+) will **DECREASE**
- Premiums for Option C age bands under age 45 will also **DECREASE**
- Premiums for Option C age bands 45 and over will **INCREASE**
- Post-Retirement extra premium for 50% and No Reduction option will **INCREASE**

This is not an Open Season to Increase FEGLI Coverage! If you have any further questions please contact your Human Resources Office's Benefits Specialist.

OPEDA Hosts Annual Holiday Party and Celebration

On Wednesday, December 7th, 2011, OPEDA hosted a Holiday Party on the patio of the Whitten Building. President Iacoletti welcomed everyone, and thanked them for their attendance and support of OPEDA. President Iacoletti along with Executive Director Dora Hayes and VP for Membership Teresa Pickett, presented a check for \$1200 on behalf of OPEDA to the USDA Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). Accepting the donation was Lorena Carrasco, Campaign Manager for the CFC. Also present was Max Finberg, the Director of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships at USDA and CFC, key worker for the Office of the Secretary. OPEDA served a buffet lunch and Holiday music was played for the attendees. Over 175 people attended, a new record at this annual event.



Your Local, Elected Regional OPEDA Council Members

Region 1 – Alaska, Arizona, California, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and the Pacific Trust Territories. Regional Coordinator: **Hal Swenson**

Region 2 – Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming. Regional Coordinator: **James Krueger**.

Region 3 - Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Wisconsin. Regional Coordinator: **Randy R. Edwards**.

Region 4 – Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Texas. Regional Coordinator: **Robert Purdom**.

Region 5 – Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee. Regional Coordinator: **Michael Botelho**.

Region 6 – Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia. Regional Coordinator: **Kathleen Rajkowski**.

Region 7 – Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia. Regional Coordinator: **Ed Dickerhoof**.

Contact Information is posted on <http://opeda.net>

Simplified Process for Joining OPEDA Coming Soon

OPEDA is working with the National Finance Center (NFC) to simplify the process for signing up new members. We expect soon to be able to provide USDA employees the ability to sign up for the \$2 per pay period payroll deduction themselves using their NFC Personal Page. This will provide a quick and easy means of joining OPEDA and an alternative to the current process whereby new members are required to complete forms and submit them to NFC through their agency personnel office. If you are interested in joining OPEDA, please check our web site at <http://\opedana.net> for more information on this in the near future.

OPEDA is now on Facebook and LinkedIn!

Membership Application -

Electronic Version also available at
<http://\opedana.net>

Application for OPEDA Membership

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State and Zip _____
Telephone _____
FAX _____
E-mail _____

Employee member pays \$52 per year or \$2 per pay period by payroll deduction. Retired member pays \$25 a year. Life member – one-time payment of \$200.

- () Employee Member \$ 52
- () Payroll Deduction 2 (per pay period)
- () Retired Member 25
- () Life Membership 200 Retirees only

Mail Completed Form to:
OPEDA, PO Box 23762
Washington, DC 20026-3762
Phone (202) 720-4898