



OPEDA NEWSLETTER

Organization of Professional Employees
of the US Department of Agriculture

IN THIS ISSUE	
President's Message	1
Student Scholarships	1
'07 Pay Raise	1
Federal Budget and Spending Concerns	2
Security – Employee ID cards	2
Hispanics raise issue with OPM	2
M. Farook Sait Reelected National President	2
Public Employees Roundtable Retreat	2
OPEDA Attends Breakfast Forum	3
Telework	3
Querv to Members -Thrift Savings Plan	3

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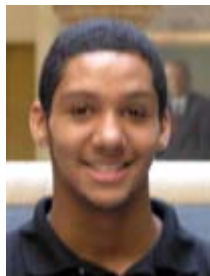
President's Message

The election is over. I want to thank all of you who voted. I especially want to thank those who placed their confidence in my leadership. I promise to work hard for the organization and look forward to your continued support.

On November 15, 2006, OPEDA is sponsoring an International Bazaar fund-raiser for the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) on the Patio, Whitten Building. Several other employee organizations will also participate. We hope to make this an annual event that will raise funds for a worthy cause. If you wish to make a donation to the CFC please mail your checks to the OPEDA office and we will deliver the full amount to the Secretary.

Student Scholarships

This year we awarded 5 scholarships of \$500 each to the following students:



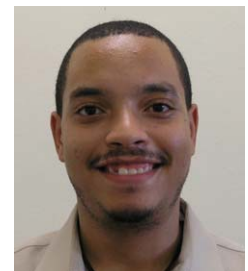
Name: Carlos Rojas
School: Rutgers University
Year in school: Sophomore
Major: Undecided
Role Model or Mentor: My father, Miguel Rojas.

Name: Ashley Frazier
School: University of Maryland-College Park
Year in school: Sophomore
Major: Criminal Justice

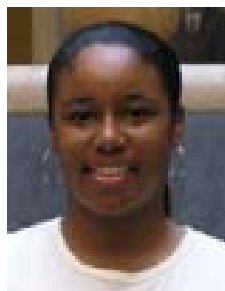


Name: Aisha Nicole Davis
School: Washington & Lee University
Year in school: Sophomore
Major: Politics & French

Name: David A. Hill
School: Morgan State University
Year in school: Senior
Major: Telecommunications, Minor in Computer Science



Name: Dominique Golden
School: Towson University
Year in school: Sophomore
Major: Early Childhood Education



'07 Pay raise

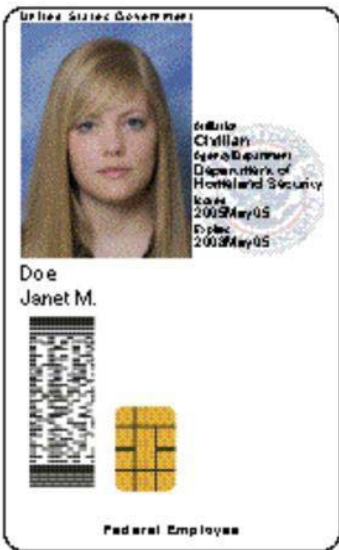
Congress has set the January 1 military pay raise at 2.2 percent making it all but certain that federal civilian employees will get the same. This would be the smallest raise for civilian employees since 1988 and the smallest military pay increase since 1994.

Federal Budget and Spending Concerns

Fifteen veterinary inspectors from APHIS traveled to Disney's Animal Kingdom in Florida for a conference on elephant training. Senator Tom Coburn labeled that as a blatant example of federal employees enjoying a "spring break" at taxpayer expense. APHIS responded saying it was essential training for inspectors who have to enforce the Animal Welfare Act at zoos and circuses nationwide.

In the assessment by Senator Coburn, it showed that spending in federal agencies for training and conferences had increased substantially since 2001. USDA spent \$8.2 million in training/conferences in 2001 and \$22.5 million in 2005, an increase of 175%.

Security – Employee ID cards



Federal agencies are required to start phasing in smart cards that adhere to common government-wide standards by October 27, 2006. Agencies can use BearingPoint to pool their buying power to lower the prices, or they can go it alone by contracting with other companies.

The high tech employee identification cards provided by the General Services Administration will cost \$110 a piece. The cards will contain identifying information about the card holder such as fingerprints and digital signatures, and will be required to access federal buildings and computer networks.

Hispanics raise issue with OPM

A coalition of Hispanic organizations criticized the Office of Personnel Management for failing to promote more government hiring and retention of Hispanic employees. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that Hispanics constitute 13.5

percent of the national labor force, but only 7.4 percent of federal employees. The representation of Hispanics at USDA is 5.8 percent.

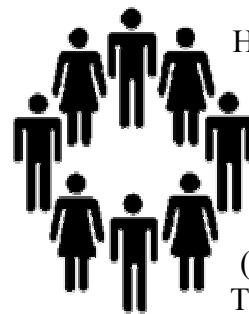
M. Farook Sait Re-elected National President of OPEDA.

M. Farook Sait was re-elected National President of OPEDA for the triennium July 1, 2006 – June 30, 2009 in a two way race in which he was opposed by Dr. George Pavelis. The Chair of the Elections Committee, Dr. James Bradley, Deputy Administrator, Agricultural Research Service and member, Region 26, reported that OPEDA member participation was 300 percent greater than in the Election of 2003. Committee members assisting Mr. Bradley were Mark Benedict, JD., FSIS, member, Region 25, and Dawn Tucker, Office of the Chief Information Officer, member, Region 27. Bruce Marti, Membership Secretary, provided outstanding administrative support to the Election Committee.



During their careers, both Sait and Pavelis have exemplified the ideals promulgated in OPEDA's Code of Ethics: Courteous, impartial and efficient service to the American people; loyalty and devoted service to our government; and fairness, moral support and recognition to our associates. OPEDA thanks these two committed members for their willingness to serve the organization.

Public Employees Roundtable (PER) Retreat



Holly Hambley represented OPEDA at The Public Employees Roundtable meeting and Annual Retreat in the offices of the Council for Excellence in Government (CEG), September 29, 2006.

The meeting was chaired by PER President Kirke Harper; Carl Fillichio, Executive Director of both CEG and PER, was key in arranging details of the meeting.

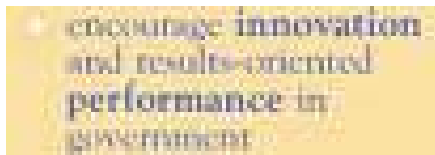
The attendees agreed that PER at the CEG is a nonprofit, non-partisan coalition of organizations that work together to better inform citizens about the quality of people in government and the value of

Public Employees Roundtable (PER) Retreat (Cont.)

services they provide, to encourage excellence in government and to promote interest in public service careers. PER has taken financial responsibility for the National Mall event during Public Service Recognition Week (PSRW) since 2001. USDA has had exhibits in this event since its inception in 1988.

Laura McFarland, representing the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration, suggested that a second area of emphasis for PER and CEG could be an outreach to plant the idea of public service in the minds of young people, ages 12 – 20. CEG with GEICO has since launched such a project – a website: YoungFeds.org to further these aims.

OPEDA Attends Early October Breakfast Forum on Innovation/Results in Public Service



On October 3, 2006, OPEDA and other members of the Public Employees Round Table were invited (as were other organizations and individuals) to attend a breakfast forum, "Taking the Leap: Innovation and Results through a New Public Service." This event was sponsored by the *Washington Post* and the Council for Excellence in Government. The presentation on the kind of Public Service that "we" would want to see ten years from now was made by The Honorable Tom Davis (VA), Chairman of the House Committee on Government Reform. The presentation was followed by Q and A Session during which. Davis stressed empowering civil servants and recognizing that people are "our" asset (both sets of italics inserted by editor). Davis also appeared to be in favor of teleworking. He supported Pay for Performance but was concerned about how performance would be measured.

Telework

Telework (telecommuting) is an interesting Program Area in the USDA Work/Life Program. Various aspects of this area are summarized in the Revised (July 14, 2006) Telework Pamphlet www.usda.gov/da/employ_RevisedTeleworkPamphlet.htm



The legal authority for telework in the government is provided under Public Law Number 106-346, Section 359, Department of Transportation Appropriations Act of 2001. This

act requires each Executive branch agency to establish a policy which allows eligible employees to participate in telework to the maximum extent possible without diminished employee performance. USDA Departmental Regulation 4080-811-002, June 2, 2005 provide policy for telework in our agency. Telework is a management tool for accomplishing organizational goals, but it may also allow the employee who is eligible to improve both performance and quality of life.

On October 24, 2006 Steve Barr (www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn describes implementation of a pilot telework (telecommuting) program in the U.S. Patent and Trademark office.

Query to Members Regarding Thrift Savings Plan

The Thrift Savings Plan has recently added new investment opportunities for participants. The OPEDA office would like to know if OPEDA members are interested in a short seminar examining these changes. Our E-mail is opedata@usda.gov.



IN MEMORIAM

"Members of OPEDA honor the memory of the five brave fire-fighters from the San Bernadino National Forest in California. We extend our condolences to the families of our fallen co-workers. Capt. Mark Loutzenhiser, Jess McLean, Jason McKay, Daniel Hoover-Najera and Pablo Cerda lost their lives in late October, 2006, while battling the deliberately set wildfire near Palm Springs, California."

Thank you for reading the OPEDA Newsletter. Your comments and contributions are welcome. Please write to us at <mailto:OPEDA@usda.gov>.

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