



The Four Winds

National Weather Service Employees Organization

November 2005

JOBS MAY BE LOST, JOHNSON TELLS NWSEO CONVENTION

NWS Director D.L. Johnson refused to give delegates to NWSEO's national convention any assurances that current NWSEO employees will keep their jobs if the NWS completes the restructuring of field operations now being planned.

Gen. Johnson addressed the delegates at the Phoenix convention on Saturday, November 5. At the conclusion of his remarks, NWSEO President Paul Greaves reminded Gen. Johnson that former NWS Director Joe Friday agreed during the MAR conducted in the 1990's that there would be a job for every NWS employee in the restructured NWS. Mr. Greaves asked Mr. Johnson whether he would make the same assurances to current NWS employees, and he immediately and unequivocally responded "NO."

As reported in earlier editions of the *Four Winds*, Gen. Johnson has appointed three teams to report to the NWS corporate board in mid-December with plans to restructure IT services; aviation forecasting and a new field "concept of operations." Versions of these plans under consideration include elimination of over 400 forecasting positions and hundreds of IT positions. NWSEO has a representative on each team to defend the interests of NWS employees.

Earlier this week, the House and Senate Conference Committee issued a final report on Commerce Department appropriations for the fiscal year which began October 1. The Committee Report included a prohibition against "consolidation, rationalization or reduction in service hours at Weather Service forecast offices." Committee staff informed NWSEO that the word "rationalization" in the Report was a typographical error and was intended to prohibit "regionalization" of forecasting. This language was adopted by the Conference Committee at the urging of NWSEO, which presented scientific evidence to the Committee that the quality of forecasting decreases with distance.

The NWS has not publicly responded to this clear prohibition by Congress, but it appears that NWS management intends to ignore Congress and proceed with field restructuring. The Aviation and “Concept of Operations” teams plan to meet in Las Vegas later this month to continue their planning for downsizing the NWS. “Vegas seems like an appropriate place to develop this risky scheme - NWS is clearly intent on gambling with the lives of Americans” said NWSEO Vice President Dan Sobien, who is the union’s representative to the Concept of Operations Team.

The cost of the Vegas meeting is unknown at this time, but NWSEO has filed a FOIA request for copies of the contract which the NWS has with a consulting group that is assisting the teams and the Corporate Board in developing these downsizing plans.

JOHNSON SEES \$40 MILLION SHORTFALL - ADMITS HE BACKED INADEQUATE BUDGET REQUEST

The cost of developing these reorganization plans comes at a time when the NWS is undergoing a severe budget shortfall. Congress is expected to approve appropriations for the NWS near the amount requested by the Bush Administration. Gen. Johnson told the Convention delegates that this will create a shortfall of approximately \$40 million this year in NWS operations.

Under heavy questioning from Convention delegates, Gen. Johnson admitted that he backed the President’s inadequate request in his dealings with Congress “but left the door open” for additional funding. The delegates loudly criticized Gen. Johnson for not standing up for NWS employees and the needs of the agency. Gen. Johnson defended his actions by stating that as a member of the Administration he backed the President’s budget request.

DELEGATES RESOLVE TO FIGHT RESTRUCTURING

Following Gen. Johnson's remarks, the Convention delegates passed a series of resolutions condemning the NWS' efforts to restructure the agency in a manner that jeopardizes America's safety and employees' jobs. A copy of these resolutions is attached to this edition of the *Four Winds*.

NWSEO PRESIDENT GREAVES ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

After twenty years of service to NWSEO, President Paul Greaves (WFO Albany) announced to the Convention that he will retire from the agency and as NWSEO President in January. Mr. Greaves is in his second term as NWSEO's President, and before that served as Vice President and Eastern Region Chair. The Convention immediately voted to award Mr. Greaves with a Life Membership in NWSEO in recognition of his service.

Mr. Greaves is NWSEO's fifth President. His predecessors were Leo Harrison, John Quadros, David Powell and Ramon Sierra.

NWSEO Executive Vice President Dan Sobien (WFO Tampa) will serve the remainder of Mr. Greaves' term. The National Council will elect a new Vice President to serve the remainder of Mr. Sobien's term.