



**LEGISLATIVE
UPDATE**

Leaving a Lasting Legacy: Former NLC Chair Steve Weidner

One of the things that helps make NATCA successful as a union is our comprehensive legislative and field advocacy efforts. Led by NATCA's National Executive Board, the National Legislative Committee (NLC), state legislative coordinators, facility legislative representatives, NATCA staff members, and our dedicated member activists, NATCA is proud to have one of the most effective grassroots networks in all of organized labor.

The NLC strives to advance the status, professionalism, benefits, and working conditions of all NATCA bargaining unit employees (BUEs) through legislative activism. The NLC accomplishes these tasks through grassroots activism, educating and training NATCA members on how to become effective legislative activists. The NLC is responsible for ensuring our grassroots networks are functioning at their best. Working in conjunction with National Office staff, the NLC helps craft grassroots messages to make sure members of Congress hear from NATCA activists.

A representative and an alternate from each of NATCA's 10 regions, one mentee, a vice-chairperson, and a national committee chairperson comprise the NLC. For the past 10 years, the NLC has been led by NATCA member Steve Weidner (Washington Center, ZDC), but as of Dec. 31, 2019, Steve has retired from the FAA and stepped down as the NLC Chair.



Weidner joined NATCA upon arriving at his first facility, Minneapolis Center (ZMP), in 1991. "For the first part of my career, I was involved locally, helping out where I was asked," he said. "Then in 2004, I attended my first NATCA in Washington (NiW) and immediately knew I had found my passion in our Union." Weidner served as the ZMP Legislative Rep for two years, and then as the alternate NLC member for the Great Lakes Region (NGL), before being appointed as the NGL NLC member in July 2006. Weidner became the Chair of the NLC in September 2009.

There have been so many legislative accomplishments and victories during Weidner's tenure as the Chair of the NLC that he cannot pinpoint a specific event or moment of which he's most proud. "More than any

individual accomplishment or victory,” he says, “I am most proud of how NATCA has grown and matured legislatively, and more importantly, as an organization over that time. The members of NATCA and the NLC members I’ve been privileged to work with are passionate and dedicated like nothing I’ve ever been a part of. Whether we are celebrating a victory, or faced with adversity, the fact that we do it together is special and I’m very proud to be a part of this great organization.”

Although Weidner has stepped down as the NLC Chair, he will not be far away. During this year, Weidner will be organizing NATCA’s 2020 grassroots campaign efforts. He will be working with NATCA’s national, regional, and local leadership, our members, the NLC, our National Office staff, and our Boots on the Ground program to help NATCA put forth a maximum effort in the 2020 elections. “We are at a critical time for our Union and it is important that we are focused and engaged in this year’s national elections,” says Weidner.

“As a retired member, I will no longer officially be a part of the NLC. However, my new role involves substantial grassroots engagement with our membership, and that is one of the primary charges of the NLC. So fortunately for me, I will still be working very closely with the NLC moving forward.”

Stepping in and Representing in a Big Way: New NLC Leadership

As Steve Weidner has retired from the FAA and stepped down from his role as NATCA National Legislative Committee (NLC) Chair, it is time for new leaders to emerge. NLC Northwest Mountain Region (NNM) Rep Richard Kennington and Western Pacific Region (NWP) Rep Trisha Pesiri-Dybvik are filling the roles of NLC Chair and the new Vice Chair position. Stepping into Kennington and Pesiri-Dybvik’s former roles as the NLC NNM and NWP Reps are Jenny Benjamin and David Skarphol, respectively.

NLC Chair Richard Kennington

Richard Kennington joined NATCA in 2000 and found his way to the NLC because of his great mentors, including Brody and Linda McCray, and Denise Spencer. At that time, there were no classes offered by NATCA, so Kennington relied on them. When Spencer stepped down from the NLC, Kennington’s regional vice president called him and asked him to fill the role. “I initially turned him down because I didn’t think I was ready to take on such an awesome responsibility,” said Kennington. “So when he called me back a few hours later and asked if I had reconsidered yet, I understood he wasn’t going to take no for an answer, so I accepted and have had the opportunity to serve with some amazing people. I’ve never regretted a minute of being on the NLC no matter how heavy the workload.”



As the incoming NLC Chair, Kennington has some goals he has implemented for himself, in addition to not messing up any of the great work that has been fulfilled to this point. "I want to empower our activists to advocate for our profession," says Kennington. "No matter how delightful we consider ourselves to be, or how important we know our careers are, there is no one out there advocating for us but us. We must control our future, or it will be done for us. Additionally, we must continue to build and solidify our relationships with members of Congress. Yes, this has been a goal of our legislative efforts since the inception, but there is still so much work to be done. There are many congressional offices that have very little meaningful contact with NATCA, others that have an acquaintance, and some that have friendships. We need to move more of Congress into the latter category, and I look forward to working with the membership to do that."

When speaking about the incoming Vice Chair of the NLC, Kennington says, "The NLC is unanimous in our excitement for Trisha Pesiri-Dybvik to fulfill the role of Vice Chair. This new position will help the NLC be more effective in our efforts and there is no one better to blaze a new trail than her."

NLC Vice Chair Trisha Pesiri-Dybvik



Trisha Pesiri-Dybvik joined NATCA in 2007, immediately upon entering her facility, Santa Barbara ATCT (SBA). Prior to assuming her role as the NLC NWP Rep in 2011, Pesiri-Dybvik served as the Legislative Rep for SBA and as the California State Coordinator. She is currently the NATCA Collaboration Facilitator for Western Service Area South.

Pesiri-Dybvik has achieved several highlights while working with the NLC. In 2019, Pesiri-Dybvik had the honor and privilege of representing NATCA and California wildfire victims at the President's State of the Union Address as a guest of California Senator Kamala Harris. Wrote Pesiri-Dybvik in a press release issued by Sen. Harris: "As my family and I have

begun to rebuild after losing our home in the Thomas Fire, the hardship we faced during the government shutdown and the looming uncertainty of another potential shutdown-have added a further layer of stress to our already challenging situation.

"Further, as an air traffic control specialist, I know that the shutdown eroded critical layers of safety within the National Airspace System and forced my NATCA brothers and sisters to show up at work with the burden of not knowing when their next paycheck would come. I am grateful to Senator Harris for inviting me to be the face of my fellow Californians who have been affected by the government shutdown and recent wildfires."

Stepping into the newly-created position of Vice Chair, Pesiri-Dybvik says her goals will remain the same as they have been during her entire tenure on the NLC. "I want to ensure that our committee is performing at the highest level possible so that we are the best at serving our members," she says.

Pesiri-Dybvik said she is humbled and honored to have been elected by the NLC to serve as the first Vice Chair and is excited about taking on a new role for NATCA during such a pivotal time in the Union's history. "I am looking forward to supporting Richard as he assumes his duties as Chair of the NLC," she said. "While following in the footsteps of longstanding NLC Chair Steve Weidner may prove to be difficult, I am supremely confident that Richard is going to do a phenomenal job and I look forward to working closely with him and the entire NLC. I know that the upcoming challenges we will be facing as a Union will be the greatest yet, but we are up for the task. Nothing fires the collective spirit of our Union like adversity, and nothing brings out the best in us like a call to action!"

NLC NNM Rep Jenny Benjamin

With Richard Kennington moving from NLC Northwest Mountain Region (NNM) Rep into the role of NLC Chair, Alternate NLC NNM Rep Jenny Benjamin was selected to assume the position of NNM Rep, giving her the distinction of being the first NATCA member to serve as the NLC Rep for two different regions. Benjamin also served as the NLC Central Region (NCE) Rep from 2013-2015.

Benjamin works at Denver Centennial ATCT (APA) where she says she enjoys "working tons of GA aircraft and corporate jets and watching the sunrise illuminate the Rocky Mountains."



She started her NATCA career in 2009 at Lincoln ATCT (LNK). During that time, she says she was most proud of her positions as LNK FacRep, Nebraska State Coordinator, and NLC NCE Rep. In 2015, she moved to the NNM region and continued to stay involved with the NLC as both the alternate region rep and the Colorado State Coordinator.

"I think it was very proactive and a great move for our team (NLC) to expand and have alternates and mentees to ensure fluidity during transitions like this," she said.

"I became active in NATCA legislative because I was hired during the White Book, and fellow NATCA controllers were already fighting for our salary and profession. I wanted to guarantee that NATCA continues to be the Union with the most powerful voice on Capitol Hill."

Benjamin also is an instructor for the Basic Legislative Activism and Leadership Experience Acceleration Project (LEAP) classes. In all of her career and Union work, she says she is "supported by my amazing husband, Joe, and adorable daughter Lyla."

NLC NWP Rep David Skarphol



David Skarphol, who has served as Alternate NLC NWP Rep since 2018, was selected to fill the role of NLC NWP Rep, as Trisha Pesiri-Dybvik moves up to the new position of NLC Vice Chair.

Skarphol was hired by the FAA and joined NATCA in 2008. His first facility was Falcon/Mesa ATCT (FFZ), and he transferred in 2013 to his current facility, Phoenix TRACON (P50).

He attended his first NATCA in Washington in 2010, and was appointed Arizona State Coordinator in 2015. In 2016, he joined the NLC as a mentee for two years before serving as the Alternate NWP Rep.

Government Affairs Update

The following is a snapshot from NATCA's GA Department.

Impeachment Proceedings

The impeachment trial began in the Senate on Thursday, January 16 and could take anywhere from two to four weeks. During the trial, all other legislative business of the Senate will likely be on hold.

Paid Parental Leave

As you recall, there was a loophole within the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020's (NDAA) "Federal Employee Paid Leave Act." Specifically, the leave provisions of the Federal Employee Paid Leave Act, which was intended to cover all federal employees, is not applicable to FAA employees, including air traffic controllers and other aviation safety professionals represented by NATCA. GA is now strategically laying the foundation to correct this loophole. The past few weeks we have been having extensive meetings with bipartisan members of Congress and staff in both the House and Senate to identify the best path forward to fix this inequity.

NATCA in Washington (NiW) 2020

Preparations are underway for this year's NiW, which will take place on March 23-25, 2020. We are excited to welcome our top-notch legislative activists to Washington where they will spend time on Capitol Hill, advocating on behalf of our NATCA membership to our elected officials about the critical work of air traffic controllers and aviation safety professionals.

NATCA Activism in Local Districts

INDIANA: RNAV Member Sworn in as Delegate of Central Indiana AFL-CIO



Congratulations to Retired NATCA Active Volunteer (RNAV) member Chris Trudeau, Indianapolis Center (ZID), who just became the most recent delegate be sworn into the Central Indiana Chapter of the Hoosier Heartland Area Labor Federation. The Hoosier Heartland Area Labor Federation is a regional charter of the Indiana AFL-CIO representing 27 of the 92 counties in the state. There are three local labor chapters under the Area Labor Federation umbrella: Northeast Indiana AFL-CIO, Central Indiana AFL-CIO, and Howard Tipton AFL-CIO. The Central Indiana Chapter of the AFL-CIO represents 50,000 union members and NATCA has three voting delegates representing this chapter.

MINNESOTA: Minneapolis TRACON Member Leaves a Lasting Imprint on Senator Tina Smith and Legislation



This time last year, we were all in the midst of the longest government shutdown in U.S. history with no end in sight. The struggle was real, the days were long, and everyone had their own personal load to bear.

Minneapolis TRACON (M98) Legislative Rep Joe Daskalakis said his own personal load to bear was a light one: a 3lb 4oz baby boy, Oliver, who arrived just under 10 weeks early but also nine days into the shutdown. The only hospital in the Twin Cities capable of delivering and supporting such an early baby on site was out of his insurance network. The offices that allowed for changing insurance when you have a qualifying life event were shut down. "Caring for and worrying about Oliver was overwhelming enough, not to

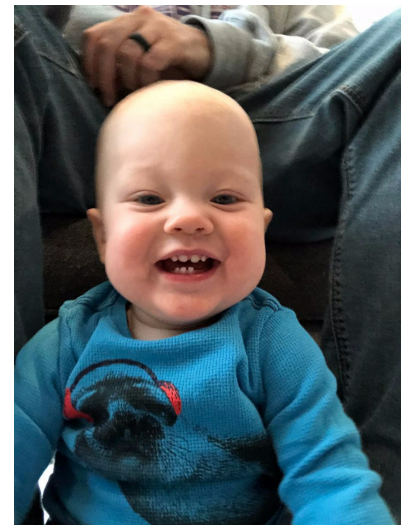
mention the thought of the bills coming in while not getting paid," said Daskalakis.

"I felt alone, isolated, and overwhelmed."

Also during this time, NATCA was out in force. There were hundreds of aviation safety professionals all across the country, handing out information to travelers and pleading for a return to safe flying. NATCA put together a letter writing campaign to members of Congress, and [Daskalakis decided to send one](#). "I sent a letter to my senators with a picture of Oliver hooked up to all of his machines," he said. "Minnesota Senator Tina Smith latched on to the story. [She had my letter and his picture on the Senate floor](#). The struggle of my family was brought up in her interviews as she fought for the furloughed federal employees. And after the longest shutdown in U.S. history ended, I was able to change my insurance and make sure Oli and mom were fully covered."

Months later, it was Daskalakis's privilege to visit Senator Smith's office during NATCA in Washington 2019. "She remembered my plight as well as the countless stories NATCA had brought to her attention, and so did her staffers," he said. "She was supportive of our efforts to use the Aviation and Airway Trust Fund to fund FAA operations in the event of a future shutdown, and expressed her gratitude for those of us who went to work everyday for an IOU."

Daskalakis thought that was the end of the situation. But last week, he received a phone call from an unknown number and answered it. It was Senator Smith. "I'm not sure how she got my number or why I answered in this age of robocalls," he said, "but I'm glad I did. Senator Smith informed me that after my ordeal during the shutdown, she wanted to make sure it never happened again. She worked with the late Representative Elijah Cummings to craft legislation that would allow federal employees to change or start FEP health coverage after a qualifying life event even during a government shutdown! While the bill itself was never passed, she said the language was incorporated into the same legislation which also gave federal employees their raise this year."



Daskalakis wants all members to never underestimate the impact they can make through just a little legislative activism. "You may not hear the wheels turning, but it doesn't mean they aren't!"

Ohio: Senator Brown Visits Cleveland Center



Pictured left to right: Youngstown ATCT (YNG) FacRep and Great Lakes Region NLC Alternate Nick Yochman, Cleveland Center (ZOB) member and NATCA Child Care Rep Jennifer Malloy, ZOB FacRep Bill Gentry, Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown, ZOB Vice President Brian White, and ZOB Legislative Rep and Ohio State Coordinator Ronny Shonk.

Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown toured Cleveland Center (ZOB) earlier this month. ZOB FacRep Bill Gentry, ZOB Vice President Brian White, ZOB member and NATCA Child Care Rep Jennifer Malloy, ZOB Legislative Rep and Ohio State Coordinator Ronny Shonk, and Youngstown ATCT (YNG) FacRep and Great Lakes Region NLC Alternate Nick Yochman all had an opportunity to meet with and speak to the Senator.

“The senator inquired about everyone's background and had questions about staffing, the hiring process, and success rates,” said Yochman. “He had a lot of interest in Jenn's position as the Child Care Rep and asked her several questions. He said he was aware that we were left out of the paid parental leave legislation and that he planned on getting it fixed. He also complimented our proposed legislation (S. 762) to avert shutdown impacts for the future.”



Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown with ZOB Vice President Brian White

During the visit, Senator Brown received a briefing from the traffic management unit (TMU), toured the training lab, and sat down and watched controllers work live traffic for about 15 minutes. “The tour was very productive, and Senator Brown made it clear that NATCA has his full support on our issues,” concluded Yochman.

Register for NATCA Legislative Classes

Sign up now for your 2020 Legislative Activism classes. Visit the [NATCA Membership Portal](#) to register. Once you have logged in, select "NATCA Academy" from the quick links. Then, select "2020 Courses." Registrants will be notified within 35 days from the course start date of their status for the course.

If you have any questions, please contact NATCA Training Coordinator Carolyn Kamara at ckamara@natcadc.org.

2020 Legislative Course Schedule:

Advanced Legislative Activism Training (ALAT)	June 16-18	Washington, D.C.
Advanced Legislative Activism Training (ALAT)	Sept. 1-3	Washington, D.C.
Legislative Activism Training (LAT)	Oct. 6-7	Las Vegas

NATCA in Washington: Deadline Approaching!



**NATCA in
Washington
registration
deadline:
Jan. 27**

new date
new location
same great conference

 **NATCA**

Marriott Marquis
March 23-25, 2020

**NiW: March 23-25
at Marriott Marquis
Earlier Date and NEW Location
[Click here](#) for Registration, Hotel,
and Travel Information**

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