

CONNECTIONS

The newsletter of LERA-ALABAMA
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Celebrating 29 Years!
LERA
ALABAMA CHAPTER
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FRIENDS AND FACES

An Interview with Gregory Tipton
FMCS Commissioner,
State of Alabama and the Florida Panhandle



Mr. Tipton became the FMCS Commissioner in January of 2013. After getting his first year under his belt, we sat down with Gregg for an interview so that our members can get to know him and his role as FMCS Commissioner.

1. What is your background?

I hold a B.S. in Organizational Management from Milligan College and an M.S. in Engineering Technology from East Tennessee State University. I spent 32 ½ years with Nuclear Fuel Services (NFS) in Erwin, TN where the primary product is producing nuclear fuel. I was a Maintenance Mechanic in the Bargaining Unit for ten (10) years before joining the management team in 1990. I served in a number of capacities from Maintenance Supervisor to Director of High Enriched Uranium Processing. My last assignment was Director of Labor Relations.

2. How did you come to be in this position?

During my career at NFS, I became a customer of the FMCS. I utilized federal mediation services as well as some of the training programs the agency provided and became quite the advocate. The greatest benefit we experienced was the number of Step 1 Grievances being resolved. The number decreased by about 70%. We also experienced a direct correlation in the improvement of the relationship. I decided I would very much like to become a federal mediator as a second career and be a part of the successes of the FMCS.

3. What are your responsibilities?

My geographical responsibilities are the state of Alabama, Florida Panhandle and a small portion of Mississippi. My primary job responsibilities are as follows, in order of priority:

- a) Contract Bargaining Negotiations – Our mission is to promote and maintain labor/management peace throughout the United States. We place our focus on negotiating contracts between the parties and do our best to ensure that employees remain on the job and employers remain viable.
- b) Training – we promote training in such areas as Steward/ Supervisor Training, Interest Based Problem Solving, Grievance Mediation, Arbitration and Relationship Development. The more training we can provide for organizations and their labor leaders, the more successful they can become in building a great working relationship.
- c) Grievance Mediation – Even though grievance mediation may not rise to the level of the other two elements of our agency, it provides a great platform to get the parties together and possibly experience true compromise. That doesn't mean either party is going to get everything they want, but it does mean they may reach a resolution they can both live with.

in this issue

Friends and Faces p.1
In the Headlines p.1
President's Corner p.2
Tipton interview continued p.2
In the Spotlight p.2
Calendar p.3

IN THE HEADLINES:

See you in Oregon...?

The National LERA Conference is headed to Oregon this year!

The 66th meeting of LERA will be held May 29th – June 1st, 2014, in Portland Oregon.

This is an information packed conference that will benefit all who attend. The conference provides nationally and internationally renowned speakers and panelists, as well as technical workshops.

This years' conference will cover:

- **Workplace Aggression and Bullying: A Human Resources Perspective**
- **Security, Surveillance and Implications for Labor Relations**
- **Management Actions to Identify & Eliminate Workplace Bullying**
- **Effective Use of Mediation & Mediators: What Advocates Need to Know**
- **New strategies for Low-Wage Workers?**
- **'Always Low Prices', But at What Cost?**
- **What a Re-imagined Labor Movement Means for Employer/Employee Relations? –**

See all the details on the LERA website at:

www.leraweb.org

PG. 1

Learn more! Our interview with Commissioner Tipton continues on page 2...

"None of us get it right all the time, but if we make relationships a priority, whether it be family, work, close friends, or just friends in general, we will find that life is so much more rewarding and fulfilling."
Gregg Tipton, FMCS Commissioner

Our interview with Commissioner Tipton continues:

4. What is the most challenging part of your job?

One of my greatest challenges is remembering that whether it is a contract negotiation, or a grievance mediation, is that it is not my deal. It ultimately resides between the parties. Fortunately, we have about an 80-85% success rate, but I tend to strive for 100% -- even though I know that is not always realistic. Sometimes the issue is beyond mediation and requires a third party binding decision.

5. The most rewarding part of your job?

The most rewarding part of my job is the gratification of getting a deal. It proves that there can (in most cases) be a resolution to problems, which supports the concept of working together to achieve a common goal. The most important element of any business is the relationship.

6. What is the most important thing that you do for your stakeholders?

Knowing the type of service that is needed at the time and delivering it in the most professional manner and at the highest level of success.

7. What are your interests outside the office?

I suppose my passion outside the office is working on my old Model A's. That was a life-long hobby that I had with my Dad for forty (40) plus years. That was the one common interest we had (because I followed his interest at a very young age) that developed our inseparable relationship. Oh, did I mention how important relationships are in all areas of life?

I also enjoy the water with my family. I purchased a boat when my two girls were very young and it created so many memorable experiences for our family for the next fifteen (15) plus years. Yet another example of how important relationships are.

None of us get it right all the time, but if we make relationships a priority, whether it be family, work, close friends, or just friends in general, we will find that life is so much more rewarding and fulfilling.

8. What else should readers know about Gregg Tipton?

Joining the FMCS was a journey. It began a little less than two (2) years ago and it wasn't easy leaving a family of friends and a career that had developed over all those years with the same employer. I relied on my faith in God to lead me in the right direction. There were a number of events that took place that confirmed this was the decision that was right for me and I have never looked back.

I have experienced two (2) lengthy strikes in my former life and have come to the conclusion that my calling is to do everything in my power to help divert work stoppages. There are no winners. Employees, employers, and communities suffer. As a result, the more training and education the FMCS can provide to the parties across the country, the greater the likelihood of a relationship that will endure the hard times and increase the good times.

It is truly my honor and pleasure to be your federal mediator in the great state of Alabama and the Florida Panhandle.

Sincerely, Commissioner Gregg A. Tipton

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER



Hello!

First of all I hope everyone is doing well.

We have had a great start to the LERA-ALABAMA Chapter meetings and we are looking forward to seeing you at our next stop, the Mobile luncheon.

This time of year is rife with meetings, conferences, and trade shows that we will all be attending. I encourage everyone to spread the word on the LERA-ALABAMA chapter and all the benefits that it provides. I know the impact that it has on me and I would like to share it with others.

I would like to personally invite each and every one of you to join us for the ALABAMA-LERA state conference in beautiful Orange Beach, Alabama, September 7th -9th. The weather is always amazing and the speakers are going to be a real treat. The chapter remains driven to provide a variety of conference topics that will enhance your day-to-day work activities. The Gulf view is an amazing bonus!

Thanks for helping make ALABAMA-LERA a success.

Stephen

IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

The 2014 Mobile Luncheon Meeting

When:

Monday, May 12, 2014

11:30 am

Where:

Wintzell's Oyster House

605 Dauphin Street, Mobile AL 36602

What: Cost is \$25.

Make your reservation on-line at
www.alabama-lera.com





UPCOMING EVENTS

MOBILE LUNCHEON MEETING

May 12, 2014 11:30am
Wintzell's Oyster House
605 Dauphin Street, Mobile AL 36602



**REGISTER NOW for the
Mobile Luncheon!**

To register, log on to
<http://www.alabama-lera.com>

HUNTSVILLE ALMRC/LERA LUNCHEON

August 7, 2014
Officer's Club
Redstone Arsenal, Huntsville Al

ALABAMA-LERA FALL CONFERENCE

September 7-9, 2014
Hampton Inn, Orange Beach Alabama

FIND IT FAST: CHECK THE WEBSITE FOR 2014 DETAILS AND EVENTS!

www.alabama-lera.com

Alabama-LERA 2013-2014 Executive Board

PRESIDENT:
Stephen C. McCormick, Dir Governmental
Affairs Division, ADOL 334.590.3931
stephen.mccormick@labor.alabama.gov

PRESIDENT ELECT:
Tony Quillen, President, IBEW 558
tquillen@ibew558.org 256-544-6951

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT:
Patrick Rasco, Director of Labor
Relations, Marshall Space Flight Center
256.679.6416 patrick.rasco@nasa.gov

TREASURER:
Bill Frederick, Alabama Power,
wefreder@southernco.com
205.257.3174

SECRETARY:
Talmage R. Reynolds, TR Consulting
trreynolds@bellsouth.net
256.654.6574

AREA VICE PRESIDENTS:
Emory Barnette, United Steelworkers
ebarnette@usw.org 251.316.0961

Edward L. Harrison, Professor Emeritus
eharriso@usouthal.edu 251.460.6715

Joe Pledger, International Rep, IBEW
joe_pledger@ibew.org 251.675.1989

Al Henley, Alabama ALF-CIO
alhenley01@bellsouth.net
334.834.1061

Valerie T. Singleton, URS
valerie.t.singleton@nasa.gov
256-544-6910

Katherine Chahrouri, NLRB
katherine.chahrouri@nlrb.gov
205.933.3016

Donald Stanley, PRES, Local 78
insulatorslocal78@aol.com
205.242.3960

We'd love to hear from you!

Please e-mail your feedback/suggestions to: patrick.rasco@nasa.gov

For information on becoming a member of LERA-Alabama contact:
Bill Frederick, 205.257.3174 wefreder@southernco.com

