

**For:** State and County Offices

**Corrected FSA-669, “Official Ballot for FSA Committee Elections” Mailing**

**Approved by:** Deputy Administrator, Field Operations



**1 Overview**

**A Background**

2013 FSA-669’s, dated 07-03-13, were mailed to producers on November 4, 2013, with a misprint that invalidates all FSA-669’s mailed. Each FSA-669 had the producer’s name printed on the back side of the actual ballot that is returned to the County Office. Producers have been notified by postcard to destroy or recycle FSA-669’s dated 07-03-13, and that any completed voted FSA-669’s mailed to the County Offices will be destroyed unopened. New FSA-669’s will be mailed to producers and they will clearly indicate that they are “Corrected” in several places, including the outside of the mailing to the producers, the ballot itself, and the outside of the envelope returning the completed ballot to the County Office.

**B Purpose**

This notice provides State and County Offices with guidance in the following areas:

- new election timeline
- County Office corrected FSA-669 mailing preparations
- handling misprinted FSA-669’s returned to County Office:
  - by producers
  - as undeliverable by USPS
- extending the terms of members up for reelection
- holding ballot counting and organizational meeting on the same day
- makeup elections.

<b>Disposal Date</b>	<b>Distribution</b>
March 1, 2014 11-20-13	State Offices; State Offices relay to County Offices

## Notice AO-1586

### 2 Action

#### A New Election Timeline

This table provides the new election timeline.

Date	Action
November 21 - December 2, 2013	Ballot counting date <b>must</b> be updated in COC election web site. The web site will be open to accept the new ballot counting date and any other necessary changes to ballot information, such as the removal of a candidate's name because the candidate withdrew from election. No new candidate names may be added to web site during this time.
December 2, 2013	Last date for updates to addresses and voting eligibility to be included in corrected FSA-669 mailing.
December 4, 2013	Ballot data provided to printing company, no changes can be made after this date.
December 20, 2013	New FSA-669 (11-13-13) to be mailed by printing company to all producers on eligible voter lists for LAA's holding election.
January 17, 2014	Voted FSA-669's (11-13-13) or FSA-669B's to be returned to County Office or postmarked by this date.
January 17 - February 3, 2014	County Offices shall enter election results in COC elections web site.
January 24, 2014	Final date for voted FSA-669's (11-13-13) and FSA-669B's to be counted.
February 3, 2014	Final date for summary ballot to be provided to STC.
February 18, 2014	New COC members take office.

#### B Preparing for Corrected FSA-669 Mailing

The ballot and nominee information that was entered into the COC election web site in September will be used for the corrected FSA-669 mailing. However, County Offices **must** update the "**Ballot Counting Date**" for each election entered. If the ballot counting date is **not** updated, ballots will be mailed with the incorrect ballot counting date currently in the web site. It is urgent that every election is updated with the correct date no later than December 2, 2013. Counties that have had a candidate's nomination withdrawn may also remove that candidate's name from the ballot during this time.

Information already entered into the election web site is still available for users to update. Follow instructions in 15-AO, subparagraph 109 D to return to the election web site and do the following by COB December 2, 2013:

- review the information on each screen for accuracy, edit as necessary, and CLICK "**Submit**" to move to the next screen
- update the date and time for ballot counting fields on the Ballot Data Screen and CLICK "**Submit**"

## Notice AO-1586

### 2 Action (Continued)

#### B Preparing for Corrected FSA-669 Mailing (Continued)

- review the names listed on the Candidate Data Screen, as follows:
  - if list of candidate names is accurate, CLICK “**Finish**” to move to the next screen
  - if there is more than 1 name on the list and a name needs to be removed because the name has been withdrawn, select the name and CLICK “**Remove From List**”
  - if there is only 1 name on the list and the candidate name has been withdrawn, notify the State Office that the election needs to be removed
  - CLICK “**Finish**” to proceed to the Sample Ballot Screen
- confirm the data in each section of the sample ballot and answer the questions
- when all the questions have been answered with “Yes”, carefully review the entire ballot to confirm the information entered is correct
- print the sample ballot for County Office’s records and CLICK “**Submit**”.

**Note:** The updated information is **not** stored until all the questions are answered with “Yes” and users CLICK “**Submit**”.

The Transaction Completed Screen will be displayed that indicates the updated information has been saved and will be printed on the corrected ballot.

**Print and save the Transaction Completed Screen** as proof that user clicked “**Submit**” on the Sample Ballot Screen and the new information was saved to the database.

#### C Misprinted FSA-669’s Voted and Mailed to County Offices by Producers

All misprinted ballots that have been completed by producers and returned to the County Office shall be retained in the ballot lockbox and destroyed unopened on **December 9, 2013**. Misprinted ballots received after December 9, 2013, **must** be destroyed unopened. Producers **must** complete and return the corrected FSA-669 (11-13-13) to have their vote counted.

#### D Bad Addresses

Misprinted FSA-669’s returned to County Offices with postage due **must** be picked up from USPS as soon as possible. Every effort **must** be made to update SCIMS with all address corrections received by **December 2, 2013**. Address corrections received after December 2, 2013, **must** be corrected in SCIMS, but the corrected ballots will **not** be printed with the updated address.

## Notice AO-1586

### 2 Action (Continued)

#### D Bad Addresses (Continued)

If no current address can be obtained for a producer, that producer is **not** participating or cooperating; therefore, the “Eligible to Vote” flag for that producer **must** be changed to “Ineligible”, according to 15-AO, subparagraph 127 F. Choose “Does not participate or cooperate in any FSA program provided for by law” as the reason for ineligibility.

The deadline to make address changes to SCIMS and eligibility changes to the election web site is **December 2, 2013**. **Address/eligibility changes not made by that date will result in the same undeliverable FSA-669’s being mailed when corrected FSA-669’s are reprinted and mailed in December.**

#### E Extending the Term of COC Members Up for Reelection

All COC members whose terms expire on December 31, 2013, shall have their terms extended to January 31, 2014, in EmpowHR.

To extend terms of COC members whose terms are expiring on December 31, 2013, do the following:

- States shall run a **CULPRT5** Report from NFC, selecting not to exceed (NTE) date “**12/31/13**” to determine who needs to be extended
- review the list name-by-name and complete an extension action in EmpowHR for members to be extended
- to complete the extension, use Nature of Action (NOA) Code “760” and change NTE date to “**01/31/14**”
- verify the base pay, and verify the last tab in the personal record labeled “Benefits” to ensure that code “34” is entered correctly so COC will get paid for their travel
- save the record and **verify the next workday** that the action was applied.

#### F Ballot Counting

All COC members, including appointed SDA members, are encouraged to be present for ballot counting. 15-AO allows FSA employees to assist with ballot counting when necessary. At least 1 COC member **must** be present for counting the ballots with the assistance of adequate County Office staff to follow requirements in 15-AO if either of the following applies:

- a quorum is **not** available
- COC chooses to conserve resources by not conducting a full COC meeting in January.

## Notice AO-1586

### 2 Action (Continued)

#### F Ballot Counting (Continued)

This applies even if there is only 1 candidate on the ballot.

All corrected ballots will contain the word “Corrected” on the front of the envelope returned to the County Office. If any misprinted ballots are in the ballot lockbox at ballot counting, they shall be separated from the corrected ballots and destroyed, unopened, after verifying that they are **not** identified as “corrected” ballots.

#### G Organizational Meetings

This notice allows continuing the practice that allows the organizational meeting to be held immediately following the ballot counting in December, **if** all of the 2014 COC members are present.

**Note:** Newly elected members may participate only in the organizational meeting, as they do not take office until February 18, 2014.

The organizational meeting minutes **must** comply with the requirements in 15-AO, including becoming page 1 of the 2014 regular minutes. The proposed organizational structure **must** be submitted to STC along with the election results for approval, and will **not** become effective until the election results are approved.

Alternatively, if all 2014 COC members are **not** present at the ballot counting, the organizational meeting may be held by teleconference in February, so that **no** travel costs will be incurred. Documents may be mailed for signatures and returned to the County Office.

County Offices shall carefully review 15-AO, paragraphs 124 through 144 to ensure that all requirements for ballot-counting, post-election activities and holding the organizational meetings are met.

#### H Makeup Elections

Dates for the makeup election remain as posted in Notice AO-1582. There will **not** be an additional makeup election following the December mailing of the corrected ballot. All makeup elections approved **must** be entered into the election web site according to the dates listed in Notice AO-1582.

**Notice AO-1586**

**2 Action (Continued)**

**I State Office Action**

State Office shall ensure:

- that County Offices are aware of and follow the guidance provided in this notice
- the terms of COC members that expire on December 31, 2013, are extended to January 31, 2014.

**J Contact**

This table provides contacts if there are questions about this notice.

<b>IF located in a...</b>	<b>THEN contact...</b>
Service Center	State Office.
State Office	Deborah Johnson, DAFO, at 202-720-0067.