

National NOW Chapters Report

To: NOW National Board

From: Supria Bhatia, Chapter Services Specialist

Date: November 9, 2019

Board Meeting: November 9, 2019

Supria Bhatia (For new board members, officers and staff)

I began working for NOW on May 29, 2018. I grew up in Upper Marlboro, Maryland and received my Bachelor's degree in Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies from The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. Prior to NOW, I was the Refugee Health Coordinator, contracted by the Department of Family Jobs and Services, at the Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center.

Chapter Services Staffing Changes

N/A

Chapter Compliance Project

In conjunction with the Chapter Specialist and Vice President, a chapter compliance project was completed to assess the status of all NOW subunits. Historically, all subunits of NOW were required to be actively registered with the IRS, have an EIN, have a valid mailing address, chapter bank account in the chapter's name, and a minimum of two distinct officers in the role of President and Treasurer, as well as file the annual 990-N.

Through our research, it was uncovered that there were chapters that were registered under the incorrect "subunit" name, had submitted an Employer Identification number that did not exist, did not have a minimum of two distinct officers, or were functioning with a lapsed IRS status.

Being compliant with National's policy will allow chapters to be eligible to receive rebate checks and be eligible to apply for National Action grants. We have sent the attached compliance flyer to every state chapter officer. In the next coming weeks, I will be sending each active chapter a letter addressing where their chapter is not compliant. They will also be receiving a compliance flyer so they have a copy of the checklist for future reference.

New Online Chapter Portal

Every chapter officer now has access to an online chapter portal. The chapter portal is an excellent resource for chapter leaders and it is important for them to gain access as soon as possible.

All state and local chapter officers are able to do the following through the online chapter portal:

- Update Chapter Information: Contact, Address, Phone Numbers, Leadership Change
- Run Membership Lists: Active, Inactive, or Both
- Run Transaction Reports

If there is a chapter officer in your district who still does not have access to the portal, they must contact chapters@now.org so the Chapters Specialist or intern can reach out to assist them.

Local chapter officers must send a request to their state president to obtain at-large membership list for their area. In the event no state president is available, the Chapters Specialist will run the report for them.

Portal Changes: the system will lock out the officer for 20 minutes after two unsuccessful login attempts. After 20 minutes, officers are able to log in using their existing credentials. After the first failed attempt, I usually ask the officer to reset their password by clicking on "Forgot Password."

Annual Reports

Chapters submitted 109 annual reports for 2016, and 97 for 2017. The 2018 annual report was made available on the NOW Leaders section of the website on January 5, 2019. As of July 7, 2019, 82 annual reports have been submitted for 2018. For the remaining annual reports, I plan on reaching out to the Chapters to urge them to submit before the year ends. One of the requirements to remain eligible for rebate checks is to file an annual report and, for that reason, my goal is to reach out to the chapters who have not submitted a report to do so before the year ends.

Due to a change in policy, the most recent chapter annual report must be submitted in order to be eligible to obtain rebate checks.

Some of the comments and suggestions chapters have for National NOW, based on 2017 annual report submissions, include:

- Supportive and positive communication between state and local chapters.
- Email addresses. When you collect memberships at the national site, we would really appreciate it if email addresses were a required field. Having no way to communicate with our members except via paper mail saddles us with additional expenses -- if we have to pay for printing and stamps, it's money we can't spend on activism, and for a growing chapter like ours, that becomes a question of sustainability.
- Provide NOW T-shirts and other merchandise that would be available for order. SWAG!!
- A medium where chapters can communicate with each other.
- Social Media Training

Some of the efforts and actions chapters completed in 2018, based on annual report submissions, include:

- Tabled at events
- Held press conferences
- Hosted film screenings
- Participated in marches
- Lobbied and met with elected officials
- Presented educational programs
- Partnered with other local organizations for fundraisers
- Registered voters

Active Chapters

For purposes of this report, chapters are considered **active** if they have at least 2 chapter officers (President & Treasurer) and a valid address on file with National. Chapters are considered **dormant** if they have fewer than 2 chapter officers and/or no valid address on file with National.

State Chapters

There are 36 **active state chapters**: 223 Active Chapters nationwide.

- **Pacific**: Alaska, California, Oregon, Washington
- **Western**: Arizona, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, Wyoming, Utah
- **Heartland**: Iowa, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Wisconsin
- **Southern**: Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee
- **Eastern**: DC, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia
- **Northern**: Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Connecticut

Dormant state chapters in need of revival are:

- **Pacific**: Hawaii
- **Western**: Colorado, Idaho, Oklahoma,
- **Heartland**: Nebraska, North Dakota, Kansas, South Dakota
- **Southern**: Alabama, South Carolina, Arkansas
- **Eastern**: Delaware
- **Northern**: Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire

New Chapter Interest Forms

There has been a significant increase in New Chapter Interest Forms since 2015, most likely due to the current political climate.

- 2015: 32
- 2016: 64
- 2017: 111
- 2018: 51
- 2019: 36 (as of October 29, 2019)

Convening Chapters

When a chapter becomes a Convening Chapter, it means 3 NOW members are listed on the Convenor Authorization Form, the form was signed by the convenor and state president (or relevant board member, if there is no state president), the form was submitted to National, and the chapter was created as a convening chapter in the database.

Currently, we are working on writing out policies to help convening chapters complete all required conditions of becoming a NOW chapter. This will prevent newly convened chapters from losing their motivation, assure them that they do have National support, and ensure they convene the chapter by the end of the year. New chapters need to apply for an Employer Identification number as soon as the name of the chapter has been approved, open a bank account in the chapter's name, have 10 members (including officers) and have at least 8 chapter meetings by the end of the year and we have decided to add deadlines to certain conditions to keep all new chapters organized. Along with the status of "Convening Chapter," each new chapter will receive \$250 start up check to begin organizing the chapter.

Chapters currently convening:

- Cape Cod NOW - Massachusetts
- Oahu NOW - Hawaii
- Nassau NOW - New York
- Washington County NOW - Utah
- Black Hawk County NOW - Iowa
- Collier NOW - Florida
- Polk County NOW - Florida
- Orange County NOW - Florida
- Citrus County NOW - Florida
- Greater Marion County NOW - Florida
- East Volusia NOW - Florida
- Loudoun County NOW - Virginia
- Johnson County NOW - Iowa

High School and College Campus Action Networks (CANs)

National NOW is dedicated to motivate more youth to organize in their communities. We have personally reached out to current CANs and provided support. The new CANs resource guide is now complete and is sent to all newly established CANs. As Board members and activists, we urge you to visit the local high schools, community colleges, and universities to promote the core values of NOW and urge students to start a Campus Action Network in their school.

Currently, we are working on pricing and purchasing new SWAG items for our CANs and Chapters. If you have any ideas, feel free to send them National's way.

New CANs:

- Spring Hill College – Alabama
- Mars Hill University – North Carolina
- University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill – North Carolina
- University of Miami – Florida
- Baruch College Campus High School – New York
- University of Minnesota – Minnesota
- University of Florida – Florida
- Florida Atlantic University – Florida

Rebate Eligibility

The Compliance project has made us realize that along with the conditions below, chapters must be registered correctly with the IRS, have two distinct officers (President & Treasurer), and be in good standing with the IRS (IRS cannot be lapsed).

To be eligible for rebates, chapters must have:

- At least 2 distinct chapter officers with current memberships - Mandatory officers: president and treasurer.
- A valid address on file
- Submitted a current annual report
- Cashed their last rebate check

Increased IRS Fee

Chapters that have lost tax-exempt status must apply to regain that status with the IRS. As of January 1, 2018, the IRS fee to do so has increased from \$400 to \$600. State and local chapter leaders should be diligent in filing their required 990-N e-Postcard or 990-EZ every year to ensure they do not lose tax-exempt status.

Robo Calls: National NOW can now facilitate robo calls to the members in your state! If your chapter is interested in placing robo calls for actions, please fill out the Robo call request form located on the Members Only Page. National requires a request at least 5 business before the call,

a 60 second .mp3 file of your recording, the date the calls should be placed and a call back number. The person placing the call will need you to be available when the calls are scheduled. For any questions, please reach out to Supria for further clarification.

National Action Campaign Request: Chapter Services has been overseeing and processing grant proposals that National has received. Since ERA is of the highest priority, National has provided three grants for the promotion of the ERA. The chapters that have been awarded the grants are Arizona NOW, North Carolina NOW and Virginia NOW.

For any chapters looking for financial aid for planned actions should feel free to submit a National Action Campaign Grant Request. The grant proposal will be processed by the Chapters Services Specialist, Supria, and she will be your contact person for any questions regarding your submission.

Note: I am currently working with our Vice President to create a procedure that will allow us to address all grant proposals in a timely manner.

District Grant Request – District Board Members! If you are looking for additional funds for an action or state chapter revival, please submit a grant proposal and budget. The link can be found on the Members Only Page under Chapter Management. The grant proposal will be processed by the Vice President, Christian Nunes, but Supria will be your contact person throughout grant period.

Other Projects and Notes

I am currently working on ordering more SWAG items for the organization as it is vital to promote the name of NOW and motivate our activists to organize and get involved. If there are ideas that the board may have for possible items as such, they can feel free to reach out to the Chapters' Specialist.

In addition to personal providing technical support for the chapter leader portal, I will also be training each incoming intern to assist chapter leaders on using the portal for their chapter.

Lastly, I am working with our Vice President to organize our policies so chapters can better comprehend National policies as well as stay organized. I plan on traveling out on the field so chapter leaders can address any concerns or comments they wish to share with National as well as obtain in-person training for the portal. My first trip is scheduled on November 9, 2019 for New Jersey's state meeting. My request to the board is to report to me when state conferences take place so I can plan my trips accordingly to meet with all state and local chapter leaders at once.