|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  | | --- | |  | | **December 2023** Newsletter | |  |   A black and white sign  Description automatically generated with low confidenceP.O. Box 164, Westmoreland, KS 66549 · (785) 477-5424 · [www.ucowf.net](http://www.ucowf.net)   |  | | --- | |  | | **PRESIDENT’S BLOG:**  First, I want to say how honored and humbled I am to have been elected the 46th President of UCOWF and I want to thank the immediate past president, Andrew Petitt, and other past presidents including, Dawn Royal and Jack Heacock, for all of their support and advice as I transition into my new role. I also want to  welcome you to our new and much improved website. Which is directly due to much diligent and hard work by members of your Board of Directors.  As we come off a very well run and successful 50th training conference held in beautiful Virginia Beach, VA. we should take a few minutes to reflect on some of the accomplishments of the organization in the past year.  First and probably foremost, thanks to members of the Intergovernmental Committee, Past President, Dawn Royal, testified in Washington D.C. before the U. S. House of Representatives on several of our priorities, including faster implementation of N.A.C. (the National Accuracy Clearing) project, higher monetary fraud collection retention rates for the states and of course newer technology with a higher level of security for EBT cards. This was and is a  real coup for UCOWF as it's the first time members of Congress have asked us to testify and have recognized us as subject matter experts in the area of welfare fraud. The Intergovernmental Committee followed this impressive feat up with several important interviews with various national news organizations. As your incoming president I fully support these efforts and look forward to the Intergovernmental Committee to building on them during the coming year.  **Continued Page 5** | |  | |  | |  | | --- | |  | | Inside This Issue President’s Blog  Intergovernmental Committee News  CWFI  Tiered Membership | |  |  Upcoming EventsNATIONAL CONFERENCE, LAS VEGAS, NV August 20-22, 2024  [National Conference - The United Council on Welfare Fraud (UCOWF)](https://www.ucowf.net/national-conference/) |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE UPDATES:By Dawn Royal and Andrew McClenahan It’s certainly been a very, very busy time since our 50th Annual Conference! We will try to keep this brief but remember that you have access to the actual documents below on our website!  **Farm Bill** – This has been a moving target in both the House and the Senate. The Farm Bill was continued through September 30, 2024, through HR 6363. No changes were made to the 2018 Farm Bill, and the bill funded SNAP (benefits and administrative funding) through January 19, 2024. This means that both the House and Senate will have to iron out differences during an election year, no easy task. We continue to engage Congress providing the experiences and perspectives of our members. We feel confident that a couple of our concerns and issues will be addressed. Make sure you like and follow our LinkedIn page, so you won’t miss out on more frequent updates!  **Outreach/Media Requests** – We continue to receive offers to comment on issues by the media:   * Most recently, Dawn was interviewed for her subject matter expertise on a nice piece on the **EBT Skimming and Account Take-Over** of benefits designated for SNAP recipients. UCOWF has been very vocal about this issue and provided key insights into the leading sources of this hot topic in previous newsletters. Please visit Scripps News and watch the 7 minute investigative video report: <https://scrippsnews.com/stories/scripps-news-survey-finds-70m-stolen-from-food-assistance-program/> * Your UCOWF co-chairs penned an opinion editorial piece that was picked up by The Hill, one of the most read publications in Washington, DC. Titled “***Fraud is gobbling up one-fifth of SNAP benefits; Congress must act to stop it****,*” we shared a litany of issues and concerns that we hope will be addressed in the 2024 Farm Bill. When you’re done reading this, I’m sure you’ll want to send share it with your colleagues, administrators, and maybe even your local legislators. Please do! <https://thehill.com/opinion/finance/4224015-fraud-is-gobbling-up-one-fifth-of-snap-benefits-congress-must-act-to-stop-it/>  Continued Next Page |  | |  | | --- | |  | | In the News Follow UCOWF on LinkedIn and Facebook where members share news, trends, success stories, and stay connected to legislative news! | |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Intergovernmental Updates Continued: • As a result of the July Fox News segment on international fraudsters targeting public assistance programs, Dawn and Andy were asked to take part in The FraudKast, a podcast hosted by Larry Benson, author of “WTF: Where’s The Fraud” and the brains behind the popular “Fraud of the Day” website. The 40-minute segment was titled, “SNAP Fraud in the 21st Century.” Please give it a listen – we have received a lot of positive feedback and we hope to do more of these! You can listen to it here: <https://fraudoftheday.com/the-state-of-fraud-in-snap/>  **Legislative Issues** – We continue to represent the UCOWF membership on national issues. Thank you to those who have sent issues and concerns that need to be addressed. Responding to the onslaught of federal bills, proposed regulations, Congressional staff inquiries... well, we’re grateful for the Christmas holiday break! The complete documents mentioned below can all be found on the UCOWF website under Legislative → Fast Facts.   * **EBT Data as Evidence in IPV for SNAP:** If you missed the 50th Annual Conference, several audience members expressed frustration in obtaining “Clear and Convincing” findings in Administrative Disqualification Hearings for trafficking violations. This will help! We have posted the official FNS memo on this issue that clearly addresses this because of UCOWF meetings with FNS back in 2018. * **Improper Payments:** We were specifically requested to respond to a Request For Information (RFI) on Improper Payments by the House Budget & Oversight and Accountability Committee Working Group. In our response, we addressed: incentivizing state and local agencies with increased funding and state retained share of recoveries, eliminating duplicate participation, the confusing guidance from CMS on recovering Medicaid fraud, the over-reliance on client self-certification and self-attestation, and fraud investigator staffing levels as just a few ways to reduce improper payments. * **Senate Bill 2954:** We sent a letter to Senator Barrasso (WY) in support of his bill, Protecting Medicaid Beneficiaries Act of 2023. * **Introduction Letter:** We sent new House Speaker Michael Johnson (LA) and staffers an introductory letter, letting him know who we are and the perspectives we can provide. * **USDA FNS on SNAP Forms:** We responded to a Request for Comments on FNS’ efforts to update their estimates regarding the burden of effort for agencies in case handling. * **SSA NPRM to Expand the Definition of a Public Assistance Household:** We responded to a Social Security Administration Noticed of Proposed Rulemaking that has significant impacts to other programs, and we requested the NPRM be withdrawn.   **Continued Next Page** | |  | | |  | | --- | |  | | Executive Board **President**  Carrol Christian (KS)  **President-Elect**  Ashley Wilkes (FL)  **Vice President**  Christopher O’Neil (FL)  **Treasurer**  Andrew Petitt (WV)  **Secretary**  Ellis Bryson (WV)  **Business Manager**  Laura Lindsey (KS)  **Email outline**  ucowfmail@gmail.com | | |
| Intergovernmental Updates Continued: **Legislative Issues continued:**   * **Consumer Finance Protection Bureau:** The CFPB published some very concerning proposed rules limiting access to public record and investigative tools (such as Accurint, Clear, TLO) for sworn and non-sworn investigators without a subpoena. The proposed rulemaking poses a significant threat to our efforts aimed at program integrity. They also intend to block access to credit-header information, a critical tool in identity and contact information. Safeguards are already in place for that. The language mirror federal legislation that continues to erode law enforcement; including efforts to require subpoenas for criminal histories. When defunding failed, the CFPB is taking administrative action in rule promulgation – in effect, becoming the 4th branch of the government. We highly recommend you read this response on our website, and we will continue to fight against any efforts to handcuff us in the performance of our duties. * **House Hearing:** We sent a letter to the House Oversight Subcommittee on Pandemic Fraud in support of the testimony from panel guests. Several comments really stood out such as, “Suggesting that benefit timeliness and benefit accuracy must be opposing goals is a false dichotomy. Benefit timeliness for eligible claimants is often most possible when fraud attacks are identified and prevented. Eligible claimants and taxpayers pay a steep price when policymakers do not take fraud prevention, detection, investigation and/or prosecution as seriously as the circumstances warrant.” The entire letter is available online for your reading pleasure. * **SNAP QC Reform:** We responded to a USDA FNS NPRM that makes some encouraging changes to the convoluted Quality Control process. While we “cautiously and broadly supported” the intent of the proposed rule, there were several concerns that needed to be voiced that can improve the next iteration published.   **Certified Welfare Fraud Investigator (CWFI):**  We are pleased to provide a valuable opportunity for individuals to become a **Certified Welfare Fraud Investigator (CWFI).** Achieving CWFI certification bestows a highly respected level of credibility to one's professional reputation, which can greatly assist in legal settings such as testifying, report writing, and character examination. We are proud to offer this certification and believe that it is an excellent way to enhance one's expertise and professional standing in the field of welfare fraud investigation. [Certification (CWFI) - The United Council on Welfare Fraud (UCOWF)](https://www.ucowf.net/certification-cwfi/)  Complete the [CWFI application.](https://members.ucowf.net/ap/Membership/Application/gLW4z6rX) |  | | |  | | --- | |  | | UCOWF Membership Levels **Champion**  **Change Maker**  **Contributor**  **Career Builder**  **Traditional**  Do you want to know more about our membership levels and all the benefits associated with each level. Click on the below link. Share with your co-workers, bosses, and other employees.  [Membership Benefits - The United Council on Welfare Fraud (UCOWF)](https://www.ucowf.net/membership-benefits/) | | |

|  |
| --- |
|  |
| **PRESIDENT’S BLOG (Continued from Page 1):**  Also, during the past year, the ad hoc Only Co. Committee entered into a major contract for not only building us a new and much more functional website but also for marketing our organization and brand. Including a total redesign of our logo and insignia which was much needed and long overdue. With the intention of moving us forward, advancing our goals and increasing membership the Only Co. Committee worked long hours and had many meetings designing and coming up with a viable strategy that should serve the organization for years to come.  This past year, both the Site Selection and Conference Committees both did outstanding jobs with the Conference Committee pulling off an extremely well run and organized 50th National Training Conference that was very educational and meaningful to the members. The site selection worked hard in identifying Las Vegas for next year's conference with both committees recognizing our expanding needs for bigger and better venues. We will keep these valuable lessons in mind as we move forward in planning larger and more effective conferences to better accommodate our members.  I am excited about the journey ahead and the positive impact we can collectively make. Your ideas, input, and support are invaluable as we embark on this united effort to defend the integrity of public assistance programs and ensure the responsible use of taxpayer dollars.  I look forward to working with each of you. Again, please visit our new website and we’ll look forward to hopefully seeing you in Las Vegas in August!  **Carrol Christian**  **UCOWF President** |
|  |

**UCOWF NATIONAL CONFERENCE:  
The United Council on Welfare Fraud's 51st National Training Conference will be held for three full days from August 20-22, 2024, at the Planet Hollywood Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada.**

* Eighteen (18) hours of training workshops focused exclusively on public assistance fraud issues ranging from front-line fraud investigations to effective program administration and fraud recovery and collection techniques.
* Opportunities to network with peers from around North America
* Two full days of contracted on-point, skill-building investigative training presented by contracted trainers from respected training organizations.
* In addition to the two days of contracted trainers, attendees will be able to choose four sessions out of the twelve program-specific specialized workshop sessions offered by subject matter experts from across the nation.
* Opportunities to hear from and share ideas directly with Federal program officials in various public assistance programs.
* The opportunity to obtain certification as a Certified Welfare Fraud Investigator (CWFI)
* The annual UCOWF Awards Luncheon INCLUDED in the three (3) day conference registration fee
* A UCOWF Welcome Social and Ice Breaker for every member and attendee the evening before the conference kicks off.
* The annual UCOWF membership business meeting to learn what’s new in UCOWF.
* Regional elections to choose which UCOWF members to represent your interests in developing organizational initiatives.
* Vendors exhibiting products and services that increase efficiency and accuracy in detecting and investigating fraud.