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Missouri ALOT - DC Experience

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July 12, 2022

National Cattlemen's Beef Association

Ethan Lane

Vice President of Government Affairs

1275 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 801, Washington, DC, 20004

Allison Rivera

Director of Government Affairs

1275 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 801, Washington, DC, 20004

Chase DeCoite

Director of Animal Health & Food Safety Policy

1275 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 801, Washington, DC, 20004

10 lobbyists in D.C. out of 18 staff members

3 teams of employees who work on specific topics

One employee (Anna Lee) who works with the Political Action Committee to raise money for the cattle industry.

Barnyard Meetings are held here. (Barnyard—groups that work in the animal industry in Washington, D.C.)

Works as a bridge between different groups to keep communications open and share ideas between different groups.

Pricing and Producer Profitability

Looking at developing small and local slaughter facilities.

Developing local markets for Ag. Products.

Niche markets can increase profitability and provide local people with improved meat quality.

Local people also trust their food more when it's local.

Help give ownership of food supply to local communities.

Product of USA Label

Looking at changing current label to processed in the USA.

Allows people to know where their food was processed.

USA facilities are inspected by the USDA and foreign locations may not have any inspection.

Trade

10.5 billion in trade surplus last year.

So far this year we are looking at a 30-40% increase in trade.

Since the exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union we should look at increasing trade with them.

Over 70% of Ag Products grown/produced in USA is consumed in the USA.

Pushing to Limit or Stop imports of beef trim from Brazil.

They have a history of waiting to alert other countries of disease outbreaks.

This can lead to accidentally introducing a disease into USA animal populations.

Focused on keeping hours of service exempt for Agriculture haulers.

One exemption gives hauls an extra 175 miles without service hours.

The exemption will allow grower to be more productive with limited ability to hire new employees.

Young people are leaving rural areas where most agricultural employment happens. They are more interested in the services and entertainment of larger cities.

Agriculture is facing a shortage of workers.

Increases in wages has not had any impact on increasing employment rates.

Want to keep store shelves full.

People want selection when shopping.

Most food is transported by truck over the road.

Currently, working to improve shipping ag products by railroad. RR companies are hard to work with and require outside help to force them to change.

Rail roads are feeling the same pinch as everyone else regarding the hiring of new employees.

Farm Bill

Currently, holding field Bills.

Talking to groups and individual to see what is important to them.

Big push this summer at the annual meeting

Risk management and Conservation will continue to be a big push from agriculture

Currently, Farm Bill set to expire in September of 2023.

Not likely to have a new farm bill by then

Likely to see an extension of the current bill for at least 1 year.

Cattle Traceability

Support voluntary disease traceability

Looking at ways to increase adoption of the program within the industry in case of a foreign disease outbreak.

There is a mandatory tracing for cattle over 18 months of age that cross state lines.

Tags only track animals from places that they were scanned.

The system relies on animals being scanned when they are transported from one place to another or being scanned at inspection stations when they cross state lines.

Looking at going to a mandatory or expanded voluntary national electronic tagging program after the fall mid-term election.

Funding is the biggest holdup on the program. States will need money to fund giving electronic tags to local producers.

Producers are not likely to implement a voluntary program that cost them lots of money.

Could we look at adding it to the farm bill?

Would something like the EQUIP or CSP programs increase producer participation? Producers could receive a payment for tracking animals.

Would offering a discount on insurance programs provide a good incentive for participation? It should reduce risk associated with owning animals.

National Pork Producers Association

Chase Adams

122 C Street, NW, Suite 875, Washington, DC, 20004

Adam Bailey

122 C Street, NW, Suite 875, Washington, DC, 20004

¼ to 1/3 of USA production in hogs is exported.

Labor

Had a labor shortage before Covid

Most farms and slaughter facilities located in rural America. Hard to get young people to move back.

Visa program (H2A) does not work very well as slaughter plants are not seasonal.

H2A Visa program is designed for seasonal labor needs of row crop and vegetable production.

Looking to get H2A extended to year-round employment.

Only able to work for 3 years per visa.

This looks like a short-term solution to the problem.

Maybe we should look at a program that provides some type of a pathway to citizenship.

Increase in wages does not help.

Slaughter facilities are higher paying than most jobs in agriculture and they still cannot hire new employees.

Pork industry is short somewhere around 30,000-36,000 employees.

Average age of farm owners continues to increase.

Labor shortages are creating increased workload for every employee in the operation.

Animal Health

Asian Swine Fever

Has killed more hogs than anything else in the history of pork production.

Working very hard to keep it out of the USA.

Worried that if it gets into the USA could cost or economy around 50 million.

Currently, there no real treatment options.

Ag Inspectors within Homeland Security are only staffed at about 2/3 of what they need.

They inspect all food entering the USA from foreign countries.

Also, inspect everyone entering the USA from a foreign country including US citizens. Trying to stop them from bringing food products into the US that could contain things we don't want introduced into our populations.

Trying to keep disease, animals, and plants not native to the USA from entering our population.

Dr. Prather at the University of Missouri

Works with Hogs (glow in the dark pigs)

Developing organs that can be transplanted directly into human

Running into problems with the FDA.

Does DNA count as a drug under the Law?

Every hog family counts as a drug for every DNA change. Each genetic strain must be approved.

1000's of lines and DNA changes. Limited money and time to approve them.

Trying to get regulation moved to the USDA.

They have the required expertise on the subject

Already have an on-farm presence.

During the commenting window on the subject the USDA received over 60,000 comments.

The USA is falling behind most countries on gene editing and bioengineering.

Even the EU is ahead of us on approving meat use for human consumption.

Could improve disease resistance and meat quality if the FDA approves the use for human consumption.

Should the FDA oversee animals? Do they have the specific knowledge needed to test the safety of animals?

The pork board located in Des Moines works more with research and development.

Funded through checkoff dollars.

Focused less on policy

There is a bill in Congress right now to create a training center for the beagle brigade.

Proposed training center would be located in Georgia.

Would develop a national training center to keep the program going

Works to keep food and plants out of the USA

This Bill would not spend any money just authorize the center.

Would require an operating budget for another source unless Congress adds a source of funding to the budget.

Prop 12 Case accepted to SCOUS

Hearing possible in October

Possible decision early in 2023

Case centers on the State of California try to control everything that enters their State.

Main Question is does California have the legal ability to interfere with the commerce of another state?

Can California place regulations on other States ag production?

Case probably will not be decided on party lines.

Decision biggest effect would be on the dairy and egg industries.

American Farm Bureau Federation

Veronica Nigh—Senior Economist

Brent Nelson—Livestock Markets Economist

6 million members across the USA

USA is divided into 4 regions

Organization is over 100 years old

Policies can and do change over time based on what the members think

Work with (lobby) Congress to shape US agriculture regulations and policies.

Starting about 5 years ago American Farm Bureau Federation started to show a more public face.

They put out 1 or 2 articles a week about what is going on in agriculture.

This is more real time data than other governmental sources.

Many members of Congress and their staff read the articles.

Weekly conference call with all 50 State farm bureau groups who work on federal issues.

Big focus right now is on the farm bill.

Crop insurance will be a big issue.

This will be the first trillion-dollar farm bill.

Probably see some programs focused on climate change.

Hopefully will keep conservation programs in place and funded.

Ukraine has taught us a lot about global food security.

FB is a very grassroots driven organization.

Haley Fisher—Economist Intern

Farm Bill working group

Works with State Farm Bureaus

Develop policies and white papers to give out information

Current white papers are outdated with increased production cost

Tax

Working to develop tax sheets for every state.

Changes to the individual tax code are temporary while the corporate tax code changes were made permanent.

Current individual tax code is set to expire in 2025. Hopefully new code will be more beneficial to ag families.

Many legislatures do not have a background in running a business or creating something on their own. (Scary that they are making policy and tax decisions that affect my business).

Domestic and Export agriculture policy should be separate.

What is good for one is not always good for the other.

Farm Bureau has been very vocal in its opinions about how the federal reserve is handling rising inflation.

Policies include raising interest rates.

Interest rate increases make it hard for individuals to buy land, make capital investments, or add equipment.

Federal reserve policies also make it harder to add new employees.

Senate Ag Committee

Fitzhugh Elder IV

Staff director committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the US Senate.

Oversight of USDA

Oversight of Ag. Markets

Big thing now is crypto currency

Currently, Farm Bill is biggest issue before the committee

The remainder of this year will focus on public hearings across the US

Find out the programs and services everyone wants

Important for every ag producer to attend meetings near their operation or virtual meetings. Their

Starting next year, the push will be on in order create a new Farm Bill.

Doubt they will get it done by next year.

Snap program is one of the single largest money draws from the Farm Bill

84% of current Farm Bill is nutrition programs and not directly paid to farmers.

Nutrition programs include school lunch, snap, wick, and other programs designed at feeding; clothing; and protecting vulnerable people.

These programs pay nothing to farm producers.

Guaranteed Loans need to stay in the new FB to make sure everyone able to farm or ranch.

Carbon Credits

Will the Farm Bill have carbon credits added to it moving forward?
Is that something the USDA or federal government should be involved in.

Climate Smart Agriculture

Current administration places a lot of its energy on climate change.

Probably going to see something about it in the upcoming farm bill

Need to be careful about shifting too much attention to climate smart agriculture. We still need the programs in the current FB.

Are we preparing our children to be successful in life? Education, work ethic, and ability to do what it takes to get the job done.

July 13, 2022

Senator Josh Hawley

115 Russell Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510

Joshua MacGregor

Legislative Assistant

Chris Weihs

Chief of Staff

Kylie Bohman

Legislative Correspondent

Introductory remarks: Missouri agriculture is at a pivotal moment. It is under attack by the current administration—the most anti-ag in our lifetime—but agriculture is more important than ever. We have to defend our ability to produce and push back against the current administration, but the future is bright.

What is your position on “Right to Repair” legislation?

Legislative context: only two co-sponsors, so it would be unusual to get a markup—needs more support or be a direct priority of the committee chair. Senator Hawley is concerned about all the ways farmers are getting pinched.

How do you maintain your composure during difficult conversations¹?

Senator Hawley enjoyed the back and forth. He found it weird that she wouldn't say, “woman,” and was curious what the reason was—because she is a very smart person. The more she talked the more unbelievable it became. It's not controversial in the state of Missouri that men can't get pregnant. There is a category of people called women who deserve rights as such. This is an example of why the radical left has become so toxic to our country.

What are your views on court packing?

Senator Hawley is against it—an opinion that used to be noncontroversial. FDR's attempt to

¹ In reference to an exchange between Senator Hawley and a law professor during a Judiciary Committee hearing.

intimidate worked in New Deal cases; the rhetoric is meant to intimidate, and it has an effect. Some current justices calibrate their decisions, accordingly, including the one Senator Hawley used to work for. He has sat through many decisions he didn't like and, "It's not a judicial coup." Adding justices is not a solution—if Democrats do it, Republicans will respond in kind. Senator Hawley thinks it's unlikely to happen; it requires 60 votes, and they don't have 50.

What are your thoughts on the war in Ukraine? And are you in favor of sending more weapons? Senator Hawley is worried about the long-term effect and huge disruptions in ag and energy markets. It is becoming a quagmire that may drag on. The risk of global famine and other worldwide implications is real and the longer it goes on, the worse it gets. He voted against the most recent aid package because he feared we're turning Ukraine into a vassal state where we are funding their war effort, and he believes it is an invitation to another Afghanistan. \$100B to start to rebuild. The only way to shorten the conflict is to put troops on the ground. And nuclear war. Russia is a bad actor and destabilizing; however, our principal threat is China. The supply chain disruptions will be exponentially worse if China gains control of the Pacific, which would be devastating to Missouri agriculture. We need to encourage European allies to do more; we're the only ones positioned to take on China, so they need to handle Europe/Russia.

How do we build back infrastructure?

We made a choice that we wanted to have agriculture and be food secure and that family farming was worth preserving. There are too few farmers, and the trendline is bad. We need to make that same choice with critical industries. How do we prioritize agriculture? Then how do we do that economy wide? Jobs going overseas is having a horrible effect. It causes a hollowing out effect when people have to drive further for work, kids aren't in the schools, etc. How do we do that? There's a lot to that question. We need to see America safe and prosperous.

Representative Billy Long

2454 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

Ben Elleson
Deputy Chief of Staff

Introductory remarks: Representative Long started his career in public service at 55 after career in auctioning and real estate. He wants to do the right thing for the right reason, including seeing people when they bother to come visit. The Congressman served as the Co-Chair of the Congressional Study Group on Japan, and he was very sad about the recent assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. He has been to Brazil, Iceland, Finland, Norway, Sweden and other countries because, "If you're going to make decisions about the world, then you can't be afraid to go," even though he anticipates he will receive criticism for it in his Senate campaign.

How can you promote greater rural access to broadband despite setbacks and red tape? Students' access to the internet shouldn't be dictated by their residence. A big problem was awful mapping, so Congressman Long passed a bill on mapping. Elections have consequences,

including with respect to regulations. Since President Biden won the election, the result has been piling on as many regulations as he can, even though Democrats have rural communities, too. Before Covid, the Congressman helped pass telemedicine legislation, and that saved a lot of lives. Unfortunately, there is no quick solution on working through the red tape.

How can we prevent additional accidents at railroad crossings?

Representative Sam Graves going to lead the Transportation Committee and will be your best bet to find solutions, including solar powered systems.

Tell us about your tie.²

St. Jude Children's Research Hospital was selected as a national charity to support among auctioneers. The Congressman's daughter got cancer and though she was too old to be treated at St. Jude, the procedure used to treat her was developed there. Congressman Long always sits on the aisle during the State of the Union address and shakes the hand of the president and doesn't let go. This way, he has highlighted concerns with regional flooding, tornadoes, and other issues. At one State of the Union, President Trump signed his tie and he auctioned it for \$15,000 for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. He also tried to get the remnants of the speech that Speaker Pelosi ripped up to auction, but she declined to provide it.

Representative Jason Smith

2418 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Carl Griffin

Research Assistant (Committee on the Budget / Congressman Jason Smith)
507 Cannon Building
Washington, DC 20515

Introductory remarks: Congressman Smith is a cattle farmer from Salem, Missouri. He raises Black Angus, Red Angus, and Charolais, in addition to buffalo, including white buffalo, goats, donkeys, and sheep. He represents Southeast Missouri and has been in Congress for nine years, making him the newest Republican member of Congress within Missouri. His frustrations with local city council began his involvement in politics. He is the current Republican leader of the House Budget Committee, and he is vying to become the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee—the most powerful committee in Congress. There is not enough rural representation on the committee, which has jurisdiction over trade and affects agriculture every day. The Chair position is an internal decision party decision being made on subjective criteria.

Additional spending was incurred to combat economic downturn during the pandemic, but what is the solution going forward?

Stop the spending right now. Inflation is up over 13.8% since Joe Biden took office, and passage of American Rescue Plan is to blame. Less than 9% was used towards healthcare spending—instead it is going to parking lots and golf courses and prisoners. The current administration is trying to bring back “Build Back Broke,” but we already have too many dollars out there. Money that was passed to states is just now being spent. Missouri's budget is more than \$10B higher

² St. Jude Children's Research Hospital themed

than usual, and the House passed \$7.5 trillion in additional spending. In the meantime, gas prices increased, and real wages decreased.

Tax cuts made under President Trump are set to expire in 2025—will you seek to extend them? Yes. Congressman Smith supports the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act and believes the tools of reconciliation may allow Congress to extend the tax cut even if President Biden is in office. New trade agreements are also a top priority, in addition to addressing Medicare insolvency.

Representative Blaine Luetkemeyer
2230 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Meghan Schmittlein
Legislative Director

Introductory remarks: Congressman Luetkemeyer is a lifelong farmer and small business owner. He served three terms in the Missouri House before running for U.S. Congress. He was initially in the 9th district and is now in 3rd. He is serving his seventh term, and his focus is on financial institutions and banking. He serves on the Financial Services Committee and is the top Republican on the Consumer Protection and Financial Institutions subcommittee, as well as the Ranking Member on the Small Business Committee.

Representative Luetkemeyer believes if the Biden administration can't get something done legislatively, they'll do it via regulation. Loan fees are now called junk fees, which gives the impression that they're worthless. The executive is trying to assert authority over hotel/resort "junk fees." Similarly, Coal Country sued the EPA, and the Supreme Court reined in the ability of the government and the EPA to reinterpret the law. Per the Congressman, if it's not explicit in the law, you don't have authority to do it. He believes the current administration is playing the numbers game because not all rules will be challenged in the courts. Waters of the United States (WOTUS) is another example where the Executive administration is exceeding its authority and there is standing to push back.

Inflation is obviously another huge issue. Fertilizer and herbicide prices have doubled over a year. Inflation is caused by four things:

1. Money supply (40%)
2. Energy (20%)
3. Rules and regulations (20%)
4. Supply chain (20%)

There are too many dollars chasing too few foods and services. The cost of new rules and regulations is unbelievable—\$100B/year under President Obama. The cost under President Trump was basically \$0. It was \$201B for last year. Energy has more than doubled. Problems with the supply chain stem from, in part, paying people not to work. Inflation is 9.1% as of today, and we're a long way from it going away. The FDIC and other government agencies were colluding to drive an industry out of business.

Do you think we would be in this situation with inflation and supply chain issues if we had stayed with the gold standard?

In 1974, President Nixon and Henry Kissinger decided to go off gold and use the dollar as the standard reserve currency. They cut a deal with OPEC so that oil had to be sold in dollars. Four years ago, the Chinese went to the Russians and asked if they would take the Yuan. That was the first chink in our armor. We are the biggest boys on the block right now, but China could catch up, and when that happens, we're done. We are propping up China right now. Donald Trump got it and tried to wean us off trade. But we now have money and capital going back to China, and we are feeding the lion that is going to eat us.

How is the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau going to impact us at the local level?

It is going to increase costs and paperwork and may impact access to credit. The CFPB is not your friend—it is among the agencies most powerful and least accountable. It is Senator Warren's baby, and it will exist as long as she is in the Senate.

Can you speak to ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) and the climate agenda?

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is on the Financial Services Committee and believes we're all going to die in twelve years. The operation chokepoint took place eight years ago—they would go in and intimidate banks with threats of high-risk industries that don't need the headache of something that's caught the government and inspectors' attention. For example, it started with car dealers, coal mines, tobacco shops, etc., and now they're targeting energy companies. Driving the economy into the ditch would enable the government to take over and nationalize some of these industries (i.e., motivated by power and control).

Congresswoman Vicky Hartzler

2235 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

Madelyn Derks
Legislative Assistant

Introductory remarks: Madelyn Derks serves the Legislative Assistant for agriculture for Congresswoman Vicky Hartzler. Congresswoman Hartzler is the only Missouri Representative on the House Agriculture Committee. Farm Bill hearings started in January on topics including crop insurance, conservation programs, and Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) Program. But the Representative has no clear Farm Bill priorities yet.

In terms of legislation, the Congresswoman most recently introduced the A-PLUS Act in April, and it was referred to the Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign Agriculture. The legislation provides for greater fairness in cattle prices and market competitiveness and allows auction owners to invest in packing facilities. Representative Hartzler is also working with the EPA to ensure they produce sound science and ensure producers have access to tools and products.

A concern identified for Ms. Derks to take back to Congresswoman Hartzler is the number of ag teaching positions left unfilled. It is not a one-year problem or a Missouri problem, but it is something we nonetheless need to address. One of the ways to address the problem is to enhance

the hiring communities—for example, with broadband. This will make the communities with open positions more desirable

Another idea for the Congresswoman stems from urban students coming to Lincoln University without experience in ag. Would she consider including ag in the science curriculum in order to reach all students?

Additional topics briefly touched upon include:

- The war in Ukraine and food insecurity;
- The increased cost of gas;
- The increased cost of production more broadly;
- The value of FFA to rural communities; and
- Labor issues and opening up the H-2A visa program.

Congressman Emanuel Cleaver, II
2335 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Christina Mahoney
Chief of Staff

Introductory Remarks: Representative Cleaver was born in Texas and moved to Kansas City after college. His grandfathers on both sides of the family were farmers. His paternal grandfather mainly grew corn and a little cotton, and the Congressman and his male cousins “were the tractors,” as they chopped weeds out with a hoe. His maternal grandfather raised hogs and chickens and had one milk cow named, “Mary.” The Congressman later learned that there were, in fact, six Mary’s. He described picking peaches as, “The worst job you’ve ever had,” and acknowledged that representing a farming community in his district wasn’t a stretch.

In terms of climate smart commodities, Kansas City has a head start on urban agriculture initiatives—are there any highlights or new ones in the pipeline? The Federal Government leans dramatically to state governments. 40% of presidents served as governors, but until now we never had a mayor, so it’s instinctive to move towards the state. When money comes from Washington, it goes to states, and rural areas don’t have the administration support to do the applications for the money. Entitlement cities are Kansas City, St. Louis, Springfield, Independence, and Lee’s Summit, so they get a direct grant from the Federal Government. It is a disproportionate allocation of resources. Even if rural areas had the application resources, then they would have to fight for the scraps. “I’m biased, but I’m right.”

Should there be more oversight of community development issues?

There is a lot of oversight. The Community Development Block Grant Programs (CDBG) put in place for modern cities and are the most flexible dollars available. The problem is the Federal Government is blocked out.

Senator Roy Blunt
260 Russell Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510

Introductory remarks: Senator Blunt is a two-term senator and previously served in the U.S. House of Representatives out of Springfield, Missouri. His parents were dairy farmers. He acknowledged that not very many good things are coming from the situation in Ukraine but for the revitalization of NATO and the acknowledgement of the threat of global food insecurity. Demand is expected to double by 2050 and need is expected to double by 2060 (both as of 2010).

What are your thoughts on food traceability?

It won't be hard, but we won't do it until we have to, so we're one incident away. There are more navigable miles of river in the Mississippi River Valley than the rest of the world combined. Senator Blunt attended a food hearing recently, which included the head of a development bank in Africa. We can't do it without science, and we can't do it without Africa. It will be a moment of disruption in the food supply chain that motivates people to act. There are also conversations taking place about the impact of synthetic biology on inputs, like a corn producing its own nitrogen.

Can you tell us a bit more about the legislation that you sponsored Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA)?

All states must have a wildlife management plan. We have money, but that's not what's required to keep species off the endangered list. We don't want to further empower agencies to get involved. Implementation will involve private landowners and the states.

Another top legislative priority is providing for community behavioral health centers across the country and start to treat mental health like all other health. In the 1970s, there was a move to close big institutions, but the replacements were never put in place. Every time there's a shooting, we acknowledge there's no system, so we're finally putting in place a system.

What was your experience like on January 6?

What happened was an unacceptable travesty and a blackeye on the country. The Vice President, Senator Klobuchar, and Senator Blunt walked out the next day at 3:45 in the morning, and we were done.³ Two weeks later, the inauguration took place, and our democratic system produced someone who got elected. January 20 demonstrated the peaceful transfer of power; 100 million people watched it live (25 million on cable; 75 million some other way). President Reagan previously described it as, "...commonplace and miraculous." It has occurred every four years since 1789, and anyone who violates the law should be prosecuted. Senator Blunt also noted that the purpose of impeachment is to remove from office, which is why he voted against it.

After 26 years in Congress, what is among your proudest moments?

Senator Blunt is most proud of the progress made around mental health and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). NIH hadn't had a research increase for 10 years, and its buying power had decreased by 22% below what it had been a decade earlier. He worked to get it increased it by 51% seven years later.

³ As the Rule Committee Chairman, Senator Blunt verifies the election result.

How do we use the recent Supreme Court decision overturning *Roe v. Wade* to facilitate adoption? Senator Blunt and Senator Klobuchar co-chair the Foster Care & Adoption Caucus, which is among the largest in the Senate. Kids need families, and we need to do a better job. Extending the child tax credit and making the system less bureaucratic (but still safe for kids) will help.

July 14, 2022

National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.
Patrick Ahearn, Director of Political Affairs
Hill Thomas, VP of Legislative Affairs
Ashley Slater, VP of Regulatory Affairs

some of their top priorities over the course of the next year:

-He talked about the direct pay program, which are payments that would go toward clean energy projects. The for-profit energy companies have been able to benefit from this, but rural cooperatives have been excluded from this, as they are non-profit entities which in turn gives them tax-exempt status.

-Another main focus has been the upcoming farm bill. The Farm Bill must keep in mind the health of rural America. They're working to make sure it includes a robust broadband program.

-They're also looking ahead to the likelihood that we'll have to navigate a shifting political landscape. It's nearly unpredictable as to how this will shape the future, but their stance remains that it's best to be in the middle as policies and agendas shift. They take a pragmatic approach.

- She pointed out the pressures they increasingly face to shift toward renewable energies. It's important that they not pick battles that result in energy shortages. The push is to have 100% clean energy by 2030, but how do we get there while offering energy reliably?

-Ashley also discussed the dynamics that the various agencies have (EPA, Agriculture, Energy, Conservation, etc.) in sitting at the table together – they all have their unique priorities that governs their very purpose, and this often puts the agencies at odds with each other. Secretary Vilsack has been a very good advocate for rural America when sitting at the table with other agencies.

-What drives Ashley to be in this line of work is that it feels very mission driven to serve rural electric cooperatives. Energy companies have floors of attorneys and lobbyists, so it's important for non-profit cooperatives to have people fighting for them.

US Dairy Export Council
Krista Hardin, President and CEO

-Krista made a comment early in her discussion that 'our government is only as good as the people who invest in it.'

-The council has 117 members. They continually work to find markets for US dairy products.

-The lack of processing has been a major factor in why dairies in the US have continued to consolidate. The number of dairies has decreased, however the number of dairy cows has not.

- We have the ability to expand our dairy production here in the US, which gives us an advantage over our foreign counterparts to ultimately have a bigger share of the dairy export market.
- This gives promise to bringing young dairy producers back to rural America.

Dutch Embassy

- The US & The Netherlands have a 400+ year bond
- The Netherlands is the 2nd largest exporter of agricultural products in the world.
- They often referred to the word 'ecosystem' in describing their agricultural landscape, with an emphasis on 'circular agriculture'. It's a collaborative system.
- Producers and the Dutch government are focusing on ways in which producers can have a less input reliant agriculture in order to push forward a more sustainable agriculture.
- COVID exposed several bottlenecks. One of those bottlenecks were the supply chain issues that were felt both domestically and globally.
- Producers are capturing a premium in the market with products that are labeled as being grown sustainably, similar to organic production.
- The Netherlands has had to fall in line with the EU's production standards, including standards around animal welfare, use of pesticides, etc.