



WASHINGTON

from National Farmers Union

Corner

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DOG DAYS OF SUMMER IN WASHINGTON

With the August recess on the horizon, lawmakers in Washington spent July negotiating spending bills and introducing legislation largely aimed at better positioning themselves for the November election.

Fortunately for constituents, these elected officials will be on the campaign trail for much of late summer, and it will be relatively easy to get in touch with them. Now is the time to sound off on the issues you may have in mind.

IMMIGRATION IMPASSE

A great example of the lack of productivity in Congress came in mid-July, with the announcement from House Republican leadership that immigration reform would not be considered before the November election. Although not unexpected given the lack of progress by the House in the last several months, the open admission of defeat from high-ranking members of the caucus officially dashed any hopes of progress.

Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Fla., stated at a July press conference that his immigration bill, which would have likely served as the main vehicle for a larger immigration reform package in the House, would not be voted upon this year. He added, "it is highly irresponsible not to deal with the issue. By blocking reform ... we are in effect abdicating our duty."

The Agriculture Workforce Coalition (AWC), of which NFU is a part, agreed

wholeheartedly and issued a press release that stated, "We echo the disappointment he expressed today that [Rep. Diaz-Balart's] immigration bill will not be taken up in 2014. The AWC agrees that it is imperative that the House pass an immigration bill that addresses agriculture's current workforce, creates a viable agricultural guest worker program and bolsters border and domestic security as soon as possible."

Only a year earlier, the Senate passed a comprehensive immigration reform bill with 68 votes that would have satisfied many of the needs outlined by AWC and was also endorsed by farm labor organizations. Instead of taking a tough vote on an issue that sorely needs to be addressed, the House will walk away from immigration reform.

Meanwhile, President Obama pledged to take executive action on immigration issues. These are welcome steps that can temporarily solve labor shortages and other legal challenges to immigrants. His power is limited, however, and will almost certainly not be able to address all the problems faced by agriculture. Bold legislative leadership could, however, and NFU remains optimistic that pressure can help push comprehensive reform along... next year.

Also in July, the AWC unveiled an updated and strengthened website to help amplify agriculture's call for immigration reform. The revitalized site can be found at <http://www.agworkforcecoalition.org/>.

WATERS OF THE U.S. PROPOSED RULE

Back in March the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers issued a joint proposed rule defining which waters would be under jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act. Since then, and especially during the summer months, the issue has become the hot button issue in the countryside. Much has been said about the proposal, much of it overblown. However, there are legitimate concerns that need to be addressed. Unfortunately, some of the proposed rule is vague, so further analysis needs to be done, and EPA needs to conduct more outreach to farmers and ranchers. NFU continues to provide constructive feedback to EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers.

FARM BILL IMPLEMENTATION

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) continues to press on with finalizing the procedures for new commodity programs under the 2014 Farm Bill. In late June, the Risk Management Agency (RMA) published initial rules related to crop insurance provisions. Most notable among the rule provisions are requirements for premium subsidy eligibility based on farmers' compliance with conservation practices. Other parts of the risk management rule include reductions in assistance for farmers who convert native sod to commodity production through the Sodsaver provision, allowing irrigated and non-irrigated acres to be covered at different levels, and providing additional assistance for beginning farmers to purchase

crop insurance. This rule is open for comment through the end of August, so please contact NFU staff if you have any specific concerns.

July 10, the House Agriculture Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management held a hearing on commodity program implementation. Deputy Secretary Michael Scuse provided an update on the progress and timeline for when farmers will be required to make decisions regarding enrollment in the new programs, Agricultural Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC). A few other examples of the initial findings on commodity program implementation include:

- When the one-time election for a field to be enrolled in ARC or PLC is made, that program will stick with that specific field no matter if a different producer or owner farms that land at a later time. This applies through the next five years and could be changed if a new farm bill is adopted in 2018 or thereafter.
- All farmers will have an opportunity to update their base yields and acreage, if they so choose.
- The ARC program is commodity specific if a farmer elects to use individual coverage, but if the ARC county-option is used, the farmer must use ARC for the whole farm.

These sorts of important program specifics are still being finalized, so stay tuned for further updates from USDA and NFU in the coming weeks and months.

RENEWABLE FUEL STANDARD

The official announcement of the 2014 Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) targets remains elusive. Originally slated for June, the announcement is now expected to be made in August or September. The proposed targets have yet to undergo interagency re-

view. Despite the delay, NFU maintains that as long as the proposed volumes are fixed a later announcement is justified. NFU continues to advocate for no legislative changes to the RFS on Capitol Hill and for the administration to fix its flawed proposal.

NFU FLY-IN COMING UP: SEPTEMBER 8 - 10

This year's NFU Fall Legislative Fly-In will be held in Washington, D.C., from September 8 through September 10. This will be a fantastic opportunity for Farmers Union members to visit their members of Congress, learn more about the policymaking process, meet other family farmers and ranchers from around the country and see the sights of Washington, D.C.

Recent fly-ins have included over 300 participants and have featured a "Farm Bill Now!" rally in 2012 and an appearance by singer Neil Young in 2013. Plans are still in the works for 2014, but notable speakers have been invited, including Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy.

The fly-in will focus on topics including Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL), restoration of the Renewable Fuels Standard, negotiating the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement and implementation of the 2014 Farm Bill. Farmers Union members will carry these messages to Congress and will also receive thorough briefings on these subjects.

In order to take part in the fly-in, contact your state Farmers Union division to sign up by Aug. 4, and learn more about how you can attend this year's event or in the future.

NFU CONCLUDES 2014 ALL-STATES LEADERSHIP CAMP

"This place called All-States Leadership Camp has taught me so much

more than leadership," said recent National Youth Council (NYAC) member Adam Long from North Dakota. "I've created unique friendships and life-long memories. I've learned more here about life, passion, and living than anywhere else."

Even after the campers have left, their voices still seem to resonate through the National Farmers Union (NFU) Education Center, which purposely was designed to emphasize NFU's prominent symbol: the triangle. If one listens carefully, he or she just might hear the then-teenage voice of a state, national, or even world farm organization president talking of serving as a leader ... or singing the "Union Button."

Each summer, NFU members ages 17-20, who have distinguished themselves in their state youth programs, are given the opportunity to attend All-States Leadership Camp located in the Rocky Mountains. In addition to building leadership skills and other learning opportunities, participants also enjoy hikes and outdoor games, a camper talent show, dances, a campfire and special field trips in Colorado.

"Coming to All-States Camp was such an amazing experience for me. Meeting all new people and being able to develop myself and my leadership skills is something I will never forget," regaled another camper. "This week is one of the best weeks of my life and I will cherish it forever."

Seventy-eight years have passed since the first national leadership camp was held for Farmers Union youth. Today, the camp is tailored specifically for young adults on the cusp of building their own lives. The emphasis is on leading, yet that also means having the insight to support others during their turns to lead. "I grew up on a dairy farm working dawn to dusk. I was good at starting something and finishing something," Olympic Gold

and Bronze medalist Rulon Gardner told the campers. He spoke of following those who believed in him until he found his own path. Gardner was one of many special speakers who challenged the campers to do more with their abilities.

The role of cooperative businesses in helping farmers remain viable is a significant part of NFU's history. Cooperatives have been, and continue to be, the economic keystone of many rural communities. Cooperatives and cooperative education remains essential to NFU's education programs. During the week at All-States, campers elect a board of directors to oversee their camp co-op store, capitalize it by selling shares, operate it and liquidate it, with the profits going to a charity.

This year's camp focused on "Farming Means a World of Good," reflecting 2014 being declared the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF) by the United Nations. Campers learned to appreciate the cultural and economic value of family farm agriculture in America and worldwide.

The capstone event at All-States is when the campers elect six of their peers to represent them nationwide on the National Youth Advisory Council (NYAC). On the last evening the current NYAC members announce the new council during a special ceremony. The 2014/2015 National Youth Advisory Council includes: Nicollette Bitz, Napoleon, N.D.; Raelyn Leier, Fargo, N.D.; Chris Nemec, Holabird, S.D.; Tyson Pepler, Colo.; Dayton Trujillo, DeSmet, S.D.; and Lexie Weber, New Rockford, S.D. NYAC duties include representing thousands of Farmers Union youths who live across the country by helping plan the next year's NFU All-States Leadership Camp. These young Farmers Union leaders also work at the NFU Convention.

To participate in All-States Leadership Camp, Farmers Union members, ages 17-20, must meet specific criteria throughout the year. For more information, visit www.nfu.org/education/events/all-states-leadership-camp.

All-States is made possible by the generous donations of the FUI Foundation, Farm Credit, CoBank, the CHS Foundation and the NFU Foundation. Farmers Union also continues to invest in educational programs that were designed to encourage its members to make the most of their abilities and opportunities.



Pictured: 2014/2015 NYAC

*Back row from left: Dayton Trujillo, Tyson Pepler, Chris Nemec
Front row from left: Nicollette Bitz, Lexi Weber, Raelyn Leier*