



WASHINGTON

from National Farmers Union

Corner

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Springtime is winding into summer in our nation's capital, and "Potomac fever" is taking hold of lawmakers. Washington is usually unsettled in the summer before an election, but the recent defeat of House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, R-Va., at the hands of a primary challenger, has further shaken up Capitol Hill. Early speculation about the fallout from Cantor's defeat centers on the thought that the probability of any immigration reform passing the House is nil. Observers with an agricultural perspective on immigration reform aren't so pessimistic, however, noting that there were a few warning signs that should have alerted Leader Cantor to the fact that his seat was in jeopardy. Nonetheless, no one saw this upset coming, which sets the stage for an activity-filled summer.

COOL HEARING IN APPELLATE COURT

Legal proceedings regarding Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL) are ongoing. On May 19, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit heard arguments en banc in the case of the American Meat Institute (AMI), et al, versus the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). AMI and its cohort of multinational meat companies and foreign competitors claim that their First Amendment rights to free speech are compromised by having to inform consumers of the origins of their food.

A three-judge panel of the D.C. Court of Appeals ruled against AMI a few months ago but allowed for a re-hearing of the case on its First Amend-

ment aspects. Eleven appeals court judges heard the case on May 19 during the en banc hearing and asked many probing questions about the rationale behind the COOL regulations. NFU has intervened in the case on USDA's side and has participated at both the district court and at the D.C. Circuit supporting the current COOL regulations. NFU remains hopeful that the judges will affirm the court's earlier decision in our favor.

As NFU continues to participate in the legal defense of COOL, expenses keep racking up. Additional financial support will be needed in this fight. Contributions can be made by contacting either the NFU office or your state division.

FISCAL YEAR 2015 AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS

Spending bills for the next fiscal year are in the process of being written, debated, amended and maybe even adopted by the House and Senate. The agriculture appropriations bills have been among the first on both sides of the hill to get moving, and the floor consideration of the House bill began on June 11. Dozens of amendments were offered, including provisions related to USDA's Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA), the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC), horse slaughter, blender pumps, food safety, payment limitations, catfish inspection and dismantling the sugar program.

NFU weighed in on many of these

amendments, although the issues that have received the most national coverage are changes to the school lunch program. President Obama has threatened to veto the bill if certain poison pill provisions related to school lunch were not removed from the bill. As of press time, the House Agriculture Appropriations bill has yet to be voted up or down, and the Senate awaits consideration of its own bill.

CLAYTON ACT TURNS 100 – FOOD MERGERS CONTINUE

June 5 marked 100 years since the passage of the landmark Clayton Act, a law that prohibits anti-competitive mergers. Concentrated market power harms farmers and consumers, and the Clayton Act was intended to prevent just a few companies from taking control of sectors of our economy. Unfortunately, enforcement of the Clayton Act has been lax and now a lack of competition is the norm in most agricultural markets.

Just four days after the Clayton Act's 100th birthday, the largest meat and poultry company in the U.S. entered the highest bid to purchase the 11th-largest meat and poultry company. On June 9, Tyson Foods announced its plans to purchase Hillshire Brands for \$8.5 billion, giving the company that popularized abusive poultry grower contracts an even tighter stranglehold on farmers, growers and consumers. Pig farmers will be especially harmed, as Tyson and Hillshire once competed for hogs but are now one and the same, further eliminating competition.

NFU will fight to have the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) block this merger. Farmers Union members should voice their concerns to their senators and representatives early and often. Congressional scrutiny will help to slow down this merger and may well goad the DOJ into taking action.

RENEWABLE FUEL STANDARD (RFS)

The RFS continues to be a hot topic of conversation in Washington. The RFS, which mandates that the US transportation sector incorporate 36 billion gallons of renewable fuels by the year 2022, has come under attack in the past year in Congress and within the administration. Last November, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), proposed to reduce the RFS targets for 2014. Since the proposal, EPA and the administration have come under pressure from agricultural and ethanol interests. EPA held an open comment period on the proposed targets, which NFU participated in.

The White House was slated to finalize the 2014 RFS targets in June. However, that date is now being pushed back until at least July. NFU will continue to speak on behalf of farmers and ranchers in calling on the administration to increase the 2014 targets.

WATERS OF THE US PROPOSED RULE

On March 25, the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) issued a proposed rule defining the waters protected under the Clean Water Act (CWA). The proposed rule has several implications for America's farms and ranches since it seeks to redefine some waters. However, there are several agricultural exemptions that have been included which makes the rule much more palatable. Nevertheless, the rule has many in the agriculture community worried about regulatory overreach. While at first glance the rule does not seem to be overly burdensome, there are some misunder-

standings that need to be cleared up. NFU is working diligently with EPA to shed some light on the exact implications for NFU members.

ALL-STATES LEADERSHIP CAMP

Young adults from across the country are packing their summer gear, theme night costumes and heading to the National Farmers Union's 78th All-States Leadership Camp in the Rocky Mountains. These campers are emerging as the next generation of leaders who will make a difference in their hometown communities and across the nation's heartland. During the camp June 22 -27 at the NFU Education Center in Bailey, Colo., campers will take part in cooperative learning activities and leadership building. They will hear from an Olympian who grew up on a dairy farm and many more inspiring presenters. Log on to [Facebook.com/nfu.education](https://www.facebook.com/nfu.education) for social media updates and follow @NFUDC on twitter or #AllStates14.

BEGINNING FARMERS INSTITUTE

NFU announced the 15 participants selected for the fourth class of its Beginning Farmer Institute. Those selected for the next class are: Nicole Vojtech of Ohio; Tracey Zink of Nebraska; Courtney Krueger of North Dakota; Chris Holman and Kriss Marion of Wisconsin; Harrison Topp of Colorado; Glen Hughes and Thomas Clark of Indiana; Erin Bailey of Washington; Rick Duvall of Illinois; Chelsea Kruse of New Hampshire; Troy Hunoff of South Dakota; Nicholas Levendofsky, Matt and Leah Ubel of Kansas.

Institute participants will meet several times over the next year to learn about financial planning, farm management and farmer-owned cooperatives. In addition, they will help determine the agenda based on what they have identified as important to their operation. Topics include marketing, understanding USDA programs, re-

newable energy, recording keeping, farm transitioning and understanding the local food system.