



December 2019

HAPPENINGS ON THE HILL by Glenn Luedke

LEGISLATIVE SCHEDULE

The U.S. House of Representatives extended the legislative schedule one week (thru December 20) as many issues, mainly trade, were undecided.

FDA

The FDA is investigating recent E. coli outbreaks linked to romaine lettuce. FDA has acknowledged their methods for tracing food borne illnesses are outdated. Monitoring water safety is a major effort for tracing sources. An attempt at setting water standards was dropped in 2017 when industry said the rules were too complicated and unworkable. Stricter standards for produce farms have been consistently delayed since Congress approved the Food Safety Modernization Act in 2011. Stricter federal standards are being rewritten and large farms will have to comply by 2022.

IRS

Congress, after passing the Tax Reform Act of 1976, recognized the disproportionate burden the death tax places on agricultural producers. The Preserving Family Farms Act of 2019 increases the maximum amount allowed under the exemption from \$750,000 to \$11,000,000. IRS Code 2032A is expanded to allow more ranchers and farmers to take advantage of the special

use valuation. The use valuation allows property to be appraised on agricultural value rather than development value.

LABOR

Most farm organizations supported the recently passed agricultural labor bill that expands the H-2A visa program to year-round workers and grants relief from major wage increases. The Senate, however, has not decided if and when they will take up the Farm Workforce Modernization Act and the White House will not indicate if they will offer support. While the bill passed in the House, the 260-165 vote was short of the two-thirds margin needed to overcome a presidential veto, even if the measure was to pass in the Senate. The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) is in strong support of the legislation. Agriculture Secretary Perdue was quoted as saying the Administration plans to introduce its own merit-based immigration proposal in 2020. This proposal would include opportunities to develop a more reliable guest-worker program and provide lower-skilled workers the way to come and work and then go back to their homes. The Mexican government maintains they were "blindsided" by the labor enforcement language in the House USMCA implementation bill.

FAA

The FAA drone policy committee (Drone Advisory Committee for the 21st Century Act) now includes representation from agriculture, forestry and rural America. The Act ensures that FAA provides representation for local government officials. This is the first time representatives from agriculture and forestry have had representation.

FCC

The first meeting of the Federal Communications Commission to review connectivity and technology needs and issues of precision agriculture was recently held. The farm bill (2018) included a provision that allowed the FCC to establish the group. A task force will assess connectivity needs and demand advance deployment in a timely manner to underserved agricultural areas and promote adoption of broadband-based technologies. In addition, working groups will address mapping and analyzing connectivity on agricultural land.

USDA

The USDA issued its Pesticide Data Program Annual Summary. The report details results from 2018 residues on produce and other items. A key finding indicates that 99% of the samples tested had pesticide residues well below EPA benchmark levels. Nearly 48% of the samples had no detectable levels. A total of 10,545 samples were tested (including rice, wheat flour and heavy cream). Eighty-two samples exceeded set tolerance levels and one-half of that group came from domestic crops.

USDA reported that 85% of the states need to revise their hemp laws to comply with new nationwide rules for nationwide hemp production. FDA has been told it is important that all guidelines for cannabidiol products be confirmed to ensure hemp growers have a stable market by 2020 harvest dates.

EPA

Legislation will soon be introduced in the U.S. Senate that will limit the size of large scale concentrated animal feeding operations (per EPA: 2,500 hogs, 1,000 cattle, 700 dairy cows and 30,000 broiler chickens). Wording in the bill states that \$100 billion over a decade would be set aside for voluntary buyouts for owners who want to transition to other types of agriculture or pay down outstanding debt. The author of the bill also plans to include blocking mergers and acquisitions in the food and agriculture industry and provide \$100 billion into USDA conservation programs that pay growers to adopt climate-friendly practices. It is reported a good number of similar proposals exist.

The Pesticide Policy Coalition (PPC) sent a letter to the House Committee on Natural Resources, expressing concern regarding legislation prohibiting the use of neonicotinoid pesticides within the National Wildlife System, Protect Our Refuges Act of 2019 (H.R. 2854). In the letter, PPC stated that in seeking to ban the use of neonicotinoid pesticides in the National Wildlife System, Congress is circumventing the FIFRA Process and authority it delegated to EPA. PPC urges the Committee to refrain from restricting neonicotinoid use and allow EPA to carry out these regulatory decisions based on sound science in accordance with FIFRA.

COMMUNITY IS WHERE THE HEART IS by Torrance Lee

Over the years, I have had the privilege to serve at the annual meetings and in various committees. Whether discussing GLPs or writing articles for the newsletter, I have always felt a connection to many of you which then became my motivation to give back to the NAICC. I hope that you will take the opportunity to experience this joy so I encourage each of you to do the same. Find where your passion lies and serve with all your heart. Whether at church or with this organization because the strength of the community is dependent upon the sacrifices of their members. I know that this organization will continue to be vibrant for many years to come. The dedication the members show to one another and to NAICC is truly special.

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Have a *Hot!* Topic?

If you have any hot topics that you would like to appear in the newsletter or a News Short, please email to Lisa at lwheelock@greatlakesag.com. What is important to one NAICC member is important to the organization!



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