



Oklahoma Grain & Stocker Producers

Promoting research, trade and agricultural diversification

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UPDATE

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OG&SP leaders visited Washington D.C. Feb. 22 - 24

Livestock care, farm programs, crop insurance discussed

WASHINGTON D.C. — Oklahoma Grain and Stocker Producers President Dean Keiffer, Vice President David Von Tungeln and Candace Krebs, communications coordinator, recently traveled to Washington D.C. for meetings with each of Oklahoma's legislative delegation and other officials in the nation's capital.

Among their priority issues were implementation of the current farm bill — the subject of repeated delays — and the first glimpse of what might lie ahead for negotiations surrounding the next farm bill.

"Since this is an election year, we don't expect to see a lot done on farm policy, although House Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin Peterson is talking about starting hearings on the next farm bill in the coming months. We plan to have some additional input at that time," Keiffer said.

Other important concerns were effective crop insurance coverage, continued funding and support for Oklahoma State University's Wheat Pasture Research Unit at Marshall, concern regarding EPA's greenhouse gas endangerment finding and attempts to impose increasingly costly and intrusive environmental regulations, the need for effective wildlife management, expansion of trade through approval of pending trade agreements and a recognition of the importance of science-based food safety and livestock industry standards.

"I was pleased to see that everyone of our delegation was aware of our concerns and had plans in place to address them," Von Tungeln said. He added that the state of Oklahoma is fortunate to have a delegation that works together so smoothly and effectively for their constituents. "Other states would love to have their delegations work together the way ours does," he noted.

"We need to thank them because they work very hard to stay up-to-date on what effects us back in Oklahoma, and they do a very good job of that," Keiffer added.



CONFRONTING NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS OF LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION

While OG&SP representatives were in D.C., a roundtable of national livestock organizations hosted an educational briefing on how farmers use antibiotics as one of many tools to produce healthy animals. "I felt like we did some good work today," said a Senate Ag Committee staffer who works on livestock issues.

OG&SP repeatedly brought up the topic of antibiotic use in livestock, since attention by the media including two recent segments by ABC News' Katie Couric is generating fresh momentum behind the introduction of measures to restrict their use. Von Tungeln, as a veterinarian and a partner in a cattle feeding operation, was able to speak to the necessity of judicious use of these tools, and the strict approval processes

Top of the page, OG&SP President Dean Keiffer and Vice President David Von Tungeln meet with Congresswoman Mary Fallin, who is leaving Washington after she completes her term, to return to Oklahoma and campaign to be the state's next governor.

already in place. OG&SP also pointed out the importance of keeping meat inspection under the jurisdiction of USDA rather than having it moved to FDA.

Food safety and animal welfare were the focus of several fact-finding meetings while OG&SP was in D.C., including visits to the Animal Ag Alliance and the Animal Health Institute, which represents the pharmaceutical industry.

Kay Johnson Smith, executive vice president of the Animal Ag Alliance since 1994, explained that the organization is an umbrella effort supported by farm and livestock organizations to provide media response, tools and resources to counter threats by activist groups and works in conjunction with other organizations like the Center for Consumer Freedom, which now maintains a watchdog website on the Humane Society of the U.S. at humanewatch.org. (The center's main website with voluminous information is at www.consumerfreedom.com.)

Smith pointed out that HSUS would be hosting "Humane Lobby Day" at the Oklahoma state capital on Tuesday, March 2. According to the Humane Society's website: *"Think only professional lobbyists can lobby? Think again! The Humane Society of the United States invites you to participate in the Humane Lobby Day in Oklahoma at the State Capitol Building in Oklahoma City, where you'll make a tremendous difference for animals... This is an exciting opportunity to meet directly with your elected officials or their staff about legislation that will significantly impact animals. There will be a briefing on tips for lobbying and an overview of pending animal legislation which will prepare you to meet your elected officials and advocate for animals."*

Smith suggested that Oklahomans watch carefully what is happening in Ohio, where, despite passing an Animal Care Standards Board (as Oklahoma has also done in a pioneering move to limit activists' influence) HSUS has come in and filed a petition for a ballot initiative that would dictate animal standards to the board, a runaround tactic that may require states with existing such laws to look at ways to further strengthen them. "Oklahoma does allow for ballot initiatives," she noted. "We should be watching to see if their plan in Ohio works."

In terms of concrete legislation at the federal level, Smith brought OG&SP up to speed on the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act in the House and legislation sitting in committee in both branches of Congress to outlaw the transportation of horses for slaughter into Mexico or Canada, which would compound the nationwide problem of unwanted and neglected horses.

FARM PROGRAMS, CROP INSURANCE A BUDGET TARGET



Above, Kay Johnson Smith has been executive vice president of the Animal Ag Alliance since 1994. The alliance is a one-stop-shop on animal welfare policy, regulations, media relations and education. Below, Michael Scuse, Deputy Undersecretary of Farm Programs at USDA, discussed trade, farm bill and crop insurance.

OG&SP has heard a lot from members about the delayed implementation of the 2008 Farm Bill and the problems this has caused. OG&SP met with U.S. Department of Agriculture Undersecretary of Farm Programs Jim Miller's top deputy, Michael Scuse, a former Delaware Secretary of Agriculture — himself a grain farmer — to discuss their concerns.

Keiffer explained to him and other officials that one of the biggest concerns he hears from farmers is a new requirement that farmers provide IRS tax documentation for participation in farm programs. Keiffer said that in at least one case his landlord flatly refused to provide the information, which makes it difficult for him as the tenant farming the land.

Deputy Undersecretary Scuse asked OG&SP to relay the message that this unpopular evolution of the program was not likely to get any easier in the

future and that simply matching farm program info with IRS documentation was designed to be the least intrusive way the department could find to verify income, and was better than having tax documents shared on the local level. “If somebody’s got a better way, we’ll listen,” he said.

Keiffer also explained problems with obtaining crop insurance coverage in Oklahoma after grazing out wheat. Farmers who pay a premium to sign up but forfeit any potential payout to graze their wheat are not permitted to insure a follow-up milo crop, but programs like ACRE and SURE now require whole farm insurance participation. Farmers are caught in a catch-22. Keiffer pointed out that in the current economic climate farmers need to farm as many crops as they can on their land and are increasingly using rotational cropping systems. He said he knows of one farmer who can get coverage 60 yards away across the border in Kansas that is not allowed in Oklahoma, despite years of production history and reams of information compiled by OSU. This is a key issue for diversified farmers in Oklahoma and was carefully reiterated to each member of the Oklahoma delegation as well as House and Senate ag committee staff and USDA officials.

OG&SP was also asked on several occasions to respond to a new draft of the Standard Reinsurance Agreement for federal crop insurance. They reiterated how vital affordable effective crop insurance is, their concerns about maintaining incentives for agents who provide good service and product education for farmers, and pointed out that any savings achieved in the federal Risk Management Agency budget should be captured for agricultural use. They pointed out it would not be beneficial if the savings ended up being diverted to other spending programs, or had a negative impact on the budget baseline for the next farm bill, instead of paying down the federal deficit. The reinsurance agreement draft in question proposes cutting \$6.9 billion from federal crop insurance over the next decade. The 2008 Farm Bill authorized a renegotiation of the SRA, and the timeline calls for finalizing the agreement by Apr. 1.

Maintaining funding for farm programs is always an issue. The OG&SP leaders praised Congressman Frank Lucas, ranking member of the House Ag Committee, for his firm defense of farm programs. Congressman Lucas assured the group of his intention to defend the current level of farm program funding as new farm bill hearings begin.

DELEGATION STRONG ON ENVIRONMENT, TRADE

OG&SP officers also praised the entire delegation for standing strong against cap-and-trade legislation — particularly Senator Jim Inhofe, the ranking member of the Senate Environment and Public Works committee and a tireless opponent of climate change theory — and for supporting measures such the Murkowski amendment aimed at mitigating EPA’s authority to regulate greenhouse gas emissions. Keiffer pointed out that EPA has proposed dropping its threshold for regulation of air particulate matter in some cases by ten-fold



Above, meeting with Damon Wells, who handles livestock issues for the majority staff at the Senate Ag Committee; below, in the office with Congressman Frank Lucas, the ranking member of the House Ag Committee.





to where crossing the yard on a windy day would be subject to regulation. Likewise, a proposal to strike the word “navigable” from EPA’s Clean Water jurisdiction would bring about massive new amounts of government intrusion.

OG&SP was pleased to find the Oklahoma delegation united in its general support for pending trade agreements, including agreements with Colombia and Panama, and eventually, South Korea. OG&SP also visited the office of Kansas Congressman Jerry Moran, who introduced legislation with House Ag Committee Chairman Peterson to support expanding trade with Cuba, a move that could potentially mean an extra \$1 billion market for U.S. ag products.

Keiffer pointed out that the U.S. is at risk of losing out if it continues to fall behind other countries in the adoption of trade agreements. He shared that wheat production in the Black Sea

area has tripled in the last ten years. In regions like that where infrastructure and farmer technology is lacking, governments are stepping in to set up wheat marketing boards and help move products into overseas markets.

Fully one half of all U.S. ag exports go to four countries (Canada, Mexico, China and Japan), making the U.S. market somewhat vulnerable and in need of further diversification.

Several Oklahoma legislators noted that the administration has started talking more positively about trade, although so far little is happening.

At USDA, Undersecretary Scuse reflected a very positive attitude toward trade, saying, “Trade is my issue. We have a tremendous ability to produce in this country, and all sectors of agriculture are affected by it.” U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk is also widely seen as a positive advocate for agricultural interests in the current administration.



DOUBLE STANDARD FOR CARS AND COWS?

OG&SP was in Washington the same time Congress hosted hearings into car crashes linked to defective accelerators in some of Toyota’s most popular car models. As one of Oklahoma’s congressman said: Toyota had 30 fatalities attributed to its cars and the U.S. market has remained open to them; meanwhile, when the U.S. had one Canadian cow that tested positive for BSE — resulting in no human injuries or deaths — Japan slammed the door on all U.S. beef imports. Another irony: Congress has found the means to bailout big banks and expand social entitlement programs but always falls short of funds when it comes to implementing farm programs.

This was the kind of frustration shared as OG&SP made the rounds and a good summary of the double standards that raise the ire of many ag producers hustling to make a living far outside the Beltway.

It also explains why OG&SP leaders continue to make at least one trip to Washington D.C. every year, touching base with elected officials, acknowledging their hard work, weighing in a current issues of concern, and relaying input from the agricultural community.

“It’s extremely important to make sure our voice continues to be heard in Washington,” Keiffer said.

Above, OG&SP visited each member of the Oklahoma delegation including Congressman Tom Cole and Senator Jim Inhofe, ranking member of the Senate Environment and Public Works committee. At right, Tara Smith and David Salmonsens, as well as Richard Krause, provided OG&SP with a policy briefing at the American Farm Bureau Federation headquarters in Washington D.C.



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Membership Renewal Form

It's time to renew your membership in the OG&SP!
(All annual renewals are due after the first of the year.)

- Individual Membership - \$25
- Business Membership-\$200

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

E-mail: _____

Mail to: John Grunewald, Treasurer,
P.O. Box 1510, Woodward, OK 73802

Thanks for your support!



Seated in front, from left, Corwin Petzold, Dean Keiffer and Gary Read. Standing in the back, from left, Jeff Robinett, Richard Wuerflein, Jerry Juhnke and David Von Tungeln, all members of the OG&SP board of directors.