

Senter On The Hill 3-22-2021

Secretary of Agriculture Vilsack has been sworn into and is adding key employees to takeover leadership of USDA. Even though he is working from home in Iowa as USDA employees are not allowed to work in their offices at this time. It will take time for the FSA State Executive Directors and State Committees to be named but the process is underway.

Contained in the recently passed Covid Relief package are several items important to Rural America.

- Provides money for commodity purchases with \$400 million set-aside for Food for Peace.
- \$4 billion set-aside for food supply chains
- Grants and loans for small and mid-sized food processors, seafood processors, floating processing vessels and farmers markets
- \$100 million earmarked for small scale meat, poultry, and egg processors.
- \$500 million for rural healthcare

If you lost any livestock in the winter storms, be sure to reach out to your FSA office and see if you qualify for assistance. Also, if you had quality losses, you can sign up until April 9<sup>th</sup> for 2018 and 2019.

AAM wants to thank USDA and FSA for indefinitely suspending debt collection and foreclosures against 12,000 borrowers with farm storage, direct loans and is offering flexibility for guaranteed loans.

AAM is continuing support for reinstating COOL for meat so US consumers will know where their food comes from. AAM also is supporting Check-Off reform to make them refundable so producers have control of the dollars that are paid in and not forced to have Big Meat's agenda supported by the Check-Off's dollars.

During confirmation hearing's Sec. Vilsack agreed to take another look at market concentration in meat processing. Speaking of market concentration, Tyson is paying \$221.5 million dollar fine for price-fixing of chicken.

The family farmers in India are still holding fast in their blockade of New Deli. Women farmers have now joined the protests against the new legislation to open agriculture to corporate ownership. AAM fought that battle here in the 80's and with the loss of family farmers, Rural America felt the pain. Destroying small towns and rural communities. We fought large corporations here in America, India's family farmers are fighting multi-national corporations who want dominance in agriculture worldwide.

I was contacted about an effort to pass a Right to Repair bill. It seems more and more producers are being told they must call their dealer for repair work because if they do it themselves, it will void their warranty. Even though you buy the tractor or combine, you

cannot get the computer code to work on them. Let me know if you are having issues and support AAM joining the effort.

I got my 1<sup>st</sup> covid shot last week, now I am counting down for the second and thankfully I had no reactions.

I do not think there is a way to put into words what the last 12 months have been. The impacts it had on family and friends. I want to thank all the AAM members and supporters that got up every morning and did their work to feed our nation and the world. We don't know what Mother Nature has in store for us this year, but I'm guessing it will be a challenge.

As more people get shots and the country starts to come back to normal, AAM is discussing the possibility of holding a meeting in Kansas in late July. I think it would be more like a reunion because it has been so long since we got together.

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