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To: Deb Mazour
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Nebraska Cooperative Council's Newsletter



Cooperation in Nebraska

April 20, 2023

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

Legislative Advisory Committee ... The Council's Legislative Advisory Committee met on January 23rd. The committee reviewed and discussed around 160 bills and resolutions that the Council had flagged, summarized, and made action recommendations for. The committee approved the final actions to be taken by the Council, with the committee deciding the Council would support 38 bills, oppose 9, be neutral on 1 and monitor 114.

Following the LAC meeting, several senators and legislative staff joined the committee for lunch. This gave committee members an opportunity to meet senators and legislative staff, share information about their cooperatives, and discuss important issues.

Legislature ... As you have seen in our legislative updates, the Legislature has had a contentious session, largely due to a battle over LB 574. With only 25 days left, there are no signs that things will become more amicable. With so few bills getting a chance to be debated, most of the work of the Legislature will be done by the creation of Christmas tree bills, meaning several bills get amended into one. Multiple bills that the Council supports have been included in Christmas tree bills, so continue to monitor our legislative updates to keep track of which bills are moving forward.

EDUCATION

Director Certification Program ... The Council held Phases 3 and 4 of our Director Certification Program on January 4th and 5th in Kearney. Dr. Keri Jacobs, Associate Professor of Ag & Applied Economics at the University of Missouri; Brook Stromer, a Vice President with CoBank's Regional Agribusiness Banking Group; and Amy Ryan, a Senior Compensation and HR Consultant with Foundations Consulting (the consulting arm of Farm Credit Foundations), were facilitators for the program. Neil Stedman, Chairman of Frontier Cooperative, and Don Truhe, retired General Manager of Southeast Farmers Co-op in Burbank, SD, also joined as Phase 4 panelists.

Forty-three directors from across the state attended and gained valuable skills for capitalizing a cooperative, overseeing cooperative financials, board management and communication, and working with and evaluating CEOs.

Congratulations to the following 11 directors for completing all 4 phases of DCP:

- Robin Bochart and Troy Rainforth – Aurora C o-op Elevator Co
- Rich Eikmeier, Jim Gall, Anton Hekrdle and Justin Mastny – Farmers Union Co-op Supply Co, Clarkson
- Ryan Riechmuth – Cooperative Supply Inc, Dodge
- Jason Hupf – CPI, Hastings
- Tom Cullan – Farmers Co-op Elevator Co, Hemingford
- Matt Klingman and Dan Reeves – Frenchman Valley Farmers Co-op, Imperial

They have demonstrated a commitment to effective cooperative governance, and Nebraska's cooperative system is better for their efforts.



Above left: Dr. Keri Jacobs from the University of Missouri goes over financial statements with DCP Phase 3 participants. **Above right:** During the DCP Phase 4 panel, Bd Chair Neil Stedman (center) and Retired General Manager Don Truhe (right) answer questions from participants.

Graduate Director Seminar ... For the first time, the Graduate Director Seminar was held in conjunction with the Director Certification Program, offering directors of all levels of experience a chance to interact. The 23 GDS attendees (pictured below) had a refresher on bylaws from Bill Kutilek, attorney at Crosby Guenzel, LLP, and Rocky Weber, President of the Council. They also learned about strategic thinking from Colonel David Fivecoat. Dr. Jody Herchenbach, Agribusiness Assistant Professor at the University of Nebraska-Kearney, presented on developing the most important skills for directors.

CoBank sponsored a social hour and dinner on the evening between the two days of DCP and GDS programs, which allowed newer directors taking DCP to network with the more experienced directors attending GDS. The keynote speaker following dinner was GDS speaker Colonel David Fivecoat, retired U.S. Army officer with 4 combat tours and over 41 months in combat. Col. Fivecoat talked about leadership lessons learned during his military experience.



Multi-state Webinar ... The Council partnered with state councils in Iowa, Kansas, Oklahoma, and South Dakota to provide a webinar on January 12th from Dr. Pippa Malmgren. Dr. Malmgren is an economist who simplifies and explains complexities of the world economy, geopolitics, and technology. Nebraska had 39 participants.

Board Leadership Seminar ... The Board Leadership Seminar was held in Omaha on February 21st. Rocky Weber and Bill Kutilek offered their expertise and answered questions for 37 directors in attendance. The open forum discussions helped the directors gain an understanding of current issues and the leadership required from board members in decision making.

Excellence in Cooperative Education Committee ... The Council's ECEC met on March 22nd to review the Council's education programming for 2022-23 and begin planning for 2023-24. Committee members offered feedback on what worked well for completed programs and what might be tweaked; discussed potential speakers and topics for the coming year; and offered insights for a new program that might be launched in the coming year.

Intern Retreat ... This year's Cooperative Intern Retreat will be held in Kearney at the Younes Conference Center-South on June 14th from 11am – 4:30pm. The Intern Retreat will give interns from cooperatives across the state the opportunity to learn about the co-op business model, have discussions with co-op CEOs, and listen to a panel with producers. Watch for registration materials in early May.

Co-op 101s ... So far in 2023, the Council has presented on cooperatives to students at Doane, Southeast Community College (Beatrice), the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture (Curtis), and Southeast Community College (Lincoln). Employees from Central Valley Ag, Frontier, and Farmers Cooperative in Dorchester helped with the presentations. These speaking engagements are an important opportunity to have a conversation about the importance of cooperatives to Nebraska's economy and producers with the future leaders of the agricultural industry in our state.



Above: Taylor Collins, employee at Farmers Cooperative headquartered in Dorchester, talked with students at Doane on April 11th about the variety of job opportunities that are available at cooperatives. Also speaking to the class were Sophia Svanda and Rachel Niemann, employees with Frontier Cooperative headquartered in Lincoln.

FFA Cooperative Speaking Contest ... The Council sponsors a cooperative speaking contest. 70 students participated at the district level with 32 qualifying for the Nebraska FFA State Convention. Staff listened to speeches for the 7 students who advanced to the final round, who did an excellent job, and handed out medals to all the participants that advanced from district competitions to state. Mary Worthing from Arthur County FFA placed 3rd, Sam Hemmenway from Elgin FFA placed 2nd, and William Paxton from Stuart FFA finished 1st. Congratulations to our winners!

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

- Wed, June 14, 2023 - NCC Cooperative Intern Retreat - Kearney, Younes Conf Center South
- Wed, November 15, 2023 - NCC Annual Meeting, Hall of Fame, and Evening Reception - Kearney, Younes Conf Center North
- Thu, November 16, 2023 - Director/Manager Workshop - Kearney, Younes Conf Center North

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