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To: Deb Mazour
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Nebraska Cooperative Council's Newsletter



Cooperation in Nebraska

April 8, 2024

DIRECTOR CERTIFICATION PROGRAM / GRADUATE DIRECTOR SEMINAR

Directors from cooperatives across the state gathered in Kearney on January 3rd and 4th for Phases 1 and 2 of the Council's Director Certification Program and its Graduate Director Seminar.

Phase 1 took place on January 3rd and was facilitated by Bill Kutilek, attorney at Crosby Guenzel LLP, and Adam Feser, Director of Cooperative Advancement for the Council. Directors learned about the history of cooperatives, principles of cooperation, roles and responsibilities of directors and the management team, the legal foundations of cooperatives, and the legal obligations of directors. The 27 directors in attendance for Phase 1 were active and engaged in the discussion. Bill's directions on how to avoid jail as a director was a highlight of the day.

The Graduate Director Seminar also began on January 3rd, with Dr. Keri Jacobs, Associate Professor of Ag and Applied Economics at the University of Missouri, and Brook Stromer, Vice President with CoBank's Regional Agribusiness Banking Group, leading a conversation about how to analyze cooperative finances. There were 26 directors in attendance for GDS.

The evening of January 3rd Bill Busch gave an excellent keynote speech on leadership and building a strong, team-oriented culture. Busch coached more than 30 years at elite universities

such as Nebraska, LSU, Utah, and Wisconsin under legends like Tom Osborne, Barry Alvarez, Urban Meyer, Ed Orgeron, and Kyle Whittingham. The speech was energizing and Coach Busch stayed and mingled with directors that evening.

On January 4th, 24 directors were in attendance for Phase 2 of DCP with Dr. Keri Jacobs, Brook Stromer, and Rocky Weber, President for the Council, leading the discussion. Directors learned their roles in planning, developing board policies, and financial oversight.

January 4th was also the second day of the Graduate Director Seminar. Dr. Brian Briggeman, Professor and Director of the Arthur Capper Cooperative Center at Kansas State University, offered an interactive presentation on Cooperative Resilience built upon research he has conducted.

DCP, GDS, and the keynote speech were all well received by attendees, receiving positive feedback from evaluations.



On January 8th after an evening reception and dinner, DCP and GDS registrants enjoyed a presentation by Bill Busch followed by time for fellowship.

LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Council's Legislative Action Committee met in Lincoln on January 22nd. The LAC reviewed 64 bills and selected more than 20 on which the Council took an active position.

Following the committee meeting, the LAC hosted several senators and staffers for a

legislative luncheon. Senators and staff in attendance were introduced to members of the committee and also shared their priorities for the coming session.

LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

The short session was successful for many of the Council's priorities. LB 305, the Council's bill to deregulate grain storage and handling rates for Nebraska-licensed grain warehouses, was added to LB 262, which is on Final Reading and likely to pass. LB 139, a Council bill to increase the jurisdictional amount of small claims court to \$6,500 on July 1 and \$7,500 on July 1, 2025, passed and was signed into law.

Several other bills supported by the Council have been moving, as well. There are only 4 legislative days remaining in the session, and after the Legislature adjourns sine die a full legislative recap of the session will be distributed.

GROUNDWORK

The inaugural group of young producers participating in GROUNDWORK met in Lincoln on February 4th and 5th for a Unicameral Day. The evening of February 4th, Adam offered a presentation on the policymaking process in Nebraska and what makes it unique.

Following that presentation, Senators Tom Brandt of Plymouth and Anna Wishart of Lincoln joined us for a panel on how to advocate successfully. They did an excellent job sharing their expertise and experiences with the group, telling stories and answering questions for an hour and half. This was followed by dinner, at which the group was also joined by Senator Barry DeKay of Niobrara.

The morning of February 5th, Sean Kelley and Julia Plucker met with the group to discuss lobbying in Nebraska and offer their insights into the 2024 session.

The young producers then went to the Capital. Senator DeKay greeted GROUNDWORK in the Rotunda and provided a tour of the Legislative Library. Following the tour, everyone proceeded to the balcony to view debate, witnessing a hostile amendment attempt fail. Senator Brandt announced GROUNDWORK'S attendance, and members received a welcome from the entire Legislature.

Over lunch, Rocky and Adam offered an overview of bills with hearings before committees, then everyone attended a Transportation and Telecommunications Committee hearing listening to the exchange between those testifying on bills and the Senators on the Committee.

The feedback offered by GROUNDWORK participants for the Unicameral Day was

overwhelmingly positive.

On March 5th, GROUNDWORK held its first virtual meeting. Ag commodities expert Shawn Hackett presented on The Era of Weather Volatility. Participants learned about factors impacting weather trends and climate cycles, and how these factors will affect global crop trends and prices.

The final event for this group will be a trip to Washington DC from June 10-13 to learn about the federal legislative process.



14 individuals make up the 2023-24 GROUNDWORK cohort. They are, along with their sponsoring co-ops (L-R): Andrew Neujahr, Frontier Co-op; Brett Behrends, Farmers Co-op-Dorchester; Garrett Otter, Ag Valley; Devan Oligmueller, Westco; Cortney Brandes, Aurora Co-op; Zach Herz, CPI; Tim Bartak, Country Partners; Tucker Hartley, Ag Valley; and Dylan Rowe, Country Partners. Not pictured: Kolby Van Newkirk, Westco; Donnia Behrends, Farmers Co-op-Dorchester; and Kelsey Herz, CPI.

BOARD LEADERSHIP SEMINAR

The 2024 Board Leadership Seminar took place on February 29th in Omaha. Rocky and Bill Kutilek, attorney at Crosby Guenzel, facilitated a robust, wide-ranging conversation with 40 directors in attendance. This program continues to be well attended and well received.

WASHINGTON DC FLY-IN



Above L-R: Chris Beins, Jeremy Wilhelm, Congressman Adrian Smith, Carl Dickinson, Jerrad Stroh, and Dean Thernes

From March 19-21, the Council hosted a Congressional Fly-In to Washington DC to commence the process of educating the Nebraska Congressional Delegation on the importance of the Section 199A tax deduction and why Section 199A should not be allowed to sunset on December 31, 2025.

With a highly polarized Congress and 2024 elections upon us, there is a great deal of uncertainty as to any efforts to save the Tax Cuts and Job Act of 2017 in which nearly all of the tax cuts will expire by the end of 2025. Three members of Nebraska's delegation were not in office when Section 199A was passed in 2017. This is not unusual as there is a higher degree of turnover in Congress than what is generally assumed.

In order to have the best opportunity to keep Section 199A in place, the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives is launching a protracted educational and advocacy campaign with the help of state councils and member cooperatives.

Representing Nebraska cooperatives in March were NCC Chairman Dean Thernes, NCC

Vice-Chairman Jeremy Wilhelm, CVA CEO Carl Dickinson, Aurora Board Secretary and NCC Board Member Chris Beins and CPI Board Secretary Jerrad Stroh, along with NCC President Rocky Weber.

The group attended the Nebraska Breakfast on Wednesday morning on Capitol Hill and met personally with Senator Ricketts, Senator Fischer and Congressman Smith. They then met with staff representatives of Congressman Flood and Congressman Bacon. Following a full day on the Hill, the NCC representatives met with NCFE President Chuck Conner and NCFE Staff Marlis Carson and Lisa Van Doren for a debriefing and planning session on future activities in support of maintaining Section 199A.

NCC appreciates Brian Cavey, CoBank's Senior Vice President of Government Affairs & Knowledge Exchange Division and Chuck Connor, President of the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, for hosting the group at respective dinners to discuss Section 199(A), the Farm Bill, agriculture and general government affairs issues in our Nation's Capitol.

NEW BOARD MEMBERS APPOINTED

At its March 1, 2024 Board Meeting, the NCC Board of Directors acted to fill two vacancies created by Evan Brandes retiring from the Aurora Cooperative Board of Directors and Bart Moseman, resigning from the NCC Board as he assumes his new position of COO of Legacy Cooperative created by the merger of Panhandle Cooperative and Farmers Cooperative Elevator Company.

The NCC Board appointed Aurora Cooperative Board Secretary Chris Beins to fill the vacant producer seat and Allan Zumpfe, CEO of Farmers Cooperative-Dorchester, to fill the vacant CEO seat, both until the November 2024 board elections.

With the above, there will be elections for four Board seats on the NCC Board this November. The terms of NCC Board Chairman Dean Thernes and NCC Board Member Jeff Loschen will be up for election of four year terms, respectively. Both have indicated they plan to run for re-election. The terms of Chris Beins and Allan Zumpfe will each be up for election to a one year term to complete the vacancies of the seats to which they were appointed. Both have indicated they intend to run for to complete those terms.

YOUTH EDUCATION UPDATES

Co-op 101

The Council has been working to expand its reach to additional universities, and this spring

marked the first time giving a Co-op 101 at Midland University in Fremont. Adam presented to Midland's newly-formed AgBusiness Club. There were several current and future cooperative interns in attendance, leading to some high-level discussion.

Contacts have also been made to again present to Wayne State, Concordia, and Northeast Community College.

Adam also presented at Doane University in Crete, with the help of Bennett Perlinger from Farmers Cooperative. Professor Poppert, who has chaired the Agribusiness Department at Doane, announced his retirement. The Council appreciates his work in developing the ag leaders of the future in Nebraska.

Scholarship Application Deadline 4-15

Scholarship applications for the 2024/25 academic year are being accepted at UNL, UNK, and NCTA until April 15, 2024. [Click here for links to the applications.](#) Recipients will be announced in mid-June.

FFA

The Nebraska State FFA Convention took place April 3-5 in Lincoln. The Council sponsors the cooperative speaking competition, and there were 32 competitors this year. Six speakers advanced to the Finals, with each giving excellent speeches about the importance of cooperatives in Nebraska. Placing first was Laynee Ohm from Arthur County FFA, second was Katelyn Shimic from Gering FFA, and third was Lindsey Borgelt from Wisner-Pilger FFA. Congratulations!

Intern Retreat

The Nebraska Cooperative Council's 2024 Intern Retreat is set to take place on June 6th at the Younes Conference Center-South in Kearney from 11am to 4:30pm (CT). Registration materials will be coming in May. The program will feature a Cooperative 101 presentation, producer panel and CEO roundtable.



32 students qualified for the Cooperative Speaking Contest, which the Council sponsors, by placing 1st or 2nd at the 12 district competitions. Each presented their speech during the State FFA Convention in Lincoln with 6 advancing to the finals. Left to right with their final placings are: 2nd place - Katelyn Shimic, Gering FFA; 5th place-Chloe Scheer, Palmer FFA; 1st place-Laynee Ohm, Arthur County FFA; 3rd place-Lindsey Borgelt, Wisner-Pilger FFA; 6th place-Claire Ahrens, Pleasanton FFA; and 4th place-Jacob Wollenburg, Tri County FFA.

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

- Thu, June 6, 2024 - NCC Cooperative Intern Retreat - Kearney, Younes Conference Center-South
- Wed, November 20, 2024 - NCC Annual Meeting, Hall of Fame, and Evening Reception - Kearney, Younes Conference Center-North
- Thu, November 21, 2024 - Director/Manager Workshop - Kearney, Younes Conference Center-North
- December 2024 (dates TBD) - Leadership Luncheon Series (virtual)
- Wed, January 8, 2025 - Director Certification Program Phase 3 - Kearney, Holiday Inn
- Wed-Thu, January 8-9, 2025 - Graduate Director Seminar - Kearney, Holiday Inn
- Thu, January 9, 2025 - Director Certification Program Phase 4 - Kearney, Holiday Inn
- Mon, March 3, 2025 - Board Leadership Seminar - Omaha, Hilton

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