



WASHINGTON

from National Farmers Union

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In September, 275 Farmers Union members gathered in Washington, D.C., for the National Farmers Union (NFU) Fall Legislative Fly-In. The annual event allows Farmers Union members from across the country to meet directly with lawmakers, USDA leaders and other administration officials to discuss issues important to family farmers and ranchers. Bayer and Monsanto have agreed to terms on a \$66 billion deal. NFU continues to push for adequate support for farmers and ranchers during the downturn in the farm economy. Conservative think tank The Heritage Foundation attacked farm programs and the farmers' safety net in a recent report. NFU is set to add an agricultural policy veteran to lead the organization's public policy and communications efforts.

FARMERS AND RANCHERS DESCEND ON NATION'S CAPITAL

Amidst a severe downturn in the farm economy and increasing consolidation in the agriculture sector, NFU members from across the country traveled to the nation's capital in September to make sure the voices of farm country and rural America are heard by the federal government. Two hundred and



seventy-five NFU members made the trip to Washington, D.C. for NFU's annual Fall Legislative Fly-In, which is the most important event of the year for the organization's grassroots advocacy efforts.



The four-day event began with a briefing at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). NFU members heard from U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, who stressed the importance of writing the next Farm Bill with the purpose of addressing the needs of rural America, rather than simply trying to save money.

"I just have one bit of advice on the farm bill," said Vilsack. "That is please, please, please, don't let folks on the Hill start the conversation like they did [last time]... which was, 'Golly, let's see how much money we can save.' "When you start the conversation with saving money, you are going to lose priorities," he said.

Fly-In participants then heard from other top USDA officials: Chief Economist Robert Johansson, Natural Resources Conservation Service Assistant Chief Kirk Hanlin, and USDA Risk Management Agency Administrator Brandon Willis. They

then met with staff members from the U.S. Senate and House agriculture committees, as well officials from the White House: Deb Eschmeyer, Executive Director of First Lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move!" campaign and senior White House Policy Advisor for Nutrition, and Doug O'Brien, Senior Policy Advisor for Rural Affairs on the White House Domestic Policy Council.

During the following two days, these farmer and rancher advocates visited all 535 congressional offices to tell their members of Congress about how federal policies are impacting their operations and communities. They also honored 44 members of Congress with the Golden Triangle Award, the organization's highest legislative honor.

BAYER AND MONSANTO AGREE TO MERGE; SENATE JUDICIARY TO EXAMINE CONSOLIDATION

Monsanto Co agreed to Bayer AG's \$66 billion takeover proposal in September, setting underway yet another merger of agricultural input giants in the extremely consolidated sector. The merger marks the fifth major deal in agriculture in just the last year, preceded by an approval of





the Syngenta/ChemChina acquisition and proposed mergers between Dow/DuPont, Potash Corp./Agrium and John Deere/Precision Planting LLC.

According to Morgan Stanley Research, a merged Dow and DuPont would have about a 41 percent market share of the U.S. corn seeds and traits market, while a merged Monsanto-Bayer would have about 36 percent. In soybean seeds and traits, the group estimated a merged Dow/DuPont would have about 38 percent. Monsanto-Bayer would have 28 percent.

The Senate Judiciary Committee is set to examine consolidation and competition in the U.S. seed and agrochemical industry in late September. NFU President Roger Johnson will be testifying during the hearing, and will be joined by top executives from commodity groups and the five major seed and chemical companies.

NFU DEFENDS RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS AGAINST HERITAGE FOUNDATION ATTACK

Responding to a new report challenging the validity of the farm safety net, NFU defended the importance of risk management programs for family farmers and ranchers facing severe financial stress during the farm economic downturn. The report, released in September by conservative think tank The Heritage Foundation, claims agricultural producers are doing well financially and calls on Congress to phase out subsidies and end federal support for

crop insurance.

Despite the report's assertions, facts show that producers are not doing so well financially. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, farm income has declined more than 40 percent since 2013, and farm jobs decreased by nearly 15 percent from 2001 to 2013. Most farm budgets today project serious losses on all the major commodities. Nor is the pain limited to producers, the ripple effect through the rural economy is chilling.

"When farm country hurts, that impact is felt on both sides of the farm gate. Over the last couple years, we've seen thousands and thousands of layoffs in rural American business and manufacturing as an indirect result of the plummeting farm economy," said NFU President Roger Johnson. "This isn't just a callous attack on farmers and ranchers, this is an attack on rural American industries, jobs and communities."

The report's authors also questioned the need for government involvement in risk management for agricultural producers when other businesses don't receive the same support. As Johnson explains, agriculture is different from other industries because access to sufficient food is essential to human life.



"When it comes to improvements to food and farm policy programs, it should be our moral obligation, rather than our political impulse, that motivates change. We will continue to work on behalf of nearly 200,000 family farmers and ranchers to ensure

they can continue to feed consumers at home and abroad," Johnson concluded.

NFU TO ADD AG POLICY VETERAN TO STAFF

NFU has hired a veteran agriculture policy specialist to lead the organization's policy team through the upcoming Farm Bill and beyond. Robert (Rob) Larew will join NFU as Senior Vice President of Public Policy and Communications on November 14.



Larew has more than 20 years of public service, working on both Capitol Hill and for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). He is currently serving as the minority staff director on the House Agriculture Committee.

Prior to serving on the Committee, Larew worked as an agriculture legislative assistant and legislative director for U.S. Representative Collin Peterson (D-Minn.). He also served as a legislative assistant for the late U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone (D-Minn.) and as director of congressional and public affairs at Food Safety Inspection Service at USDA.

"I'm excited to continue my work in agriculture by joining the premier organization dedicated to supporting family farmers, ranchers, and rural communities," Larew said.

Raised on a dairy farm in West Virginia, Larew received a Bachelor of Science degree in Dairy Science from Virginia Tech.