**Washington Corner**

**November 2022**

Nearing the end of the 117th Congress, voters flocked to the polls to cast their ballots for the midterm elections earlier this month. This included all 435 House seats, 35 Senate seats, as well as a large slate of state and local races.

Throughout the last month, with Congress largely out of town, NFU has been advancing Farmers Union’s priorities through our international partnerships and regular engagement with the Biden-Harris Administration.

**USDA ANNOUNCES INVESTMENTS TO INCREASE COMPETITION IN MEAT AND POULTRY PROCESSING**

In early November, USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack announced the first round of grants through three programs that will help to increase competition in livestock markets. The Biden-Harris Administration is investing $73 million in 21 grant projects as part of the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program (MPPEP), which provides grants to help small and medium-sized processing plants grow their capacity.

One of the recipients is the Montana Premium Processing Cooperative, which was created in partnership with Montana Farmers Union and will provide access to a USDA-inspected meat processing facility to areas that currently do not have one.

The announcement of the grants marks a critical step in implementing the Biden-Harris Administration’s goals to promote competition in the American economy, particularly in the meat and poultry sectors, where nearly 85% of processing is controlled by just four large corporations. The grant investment will play a crucial role in expanding meat and poultry processing capacity, providing opportunities and fairness for small producers, and increasing competition in the meat industry. The program will also play a major role in strengthening food supply chain and lower costs for consumers.

The announcement also included an initial $75 million in Meat and Poultry Intermediary Lending Program funds, which were provided to entities in eight states, including Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota. There was also another $75 million made available for the Food Supply Chain Guaranteed Loan Program.

NFU has been and remains a strong advocate for creating fairer, more competitive markets for farmers and ranchers and expanding access to local and regional processing, as a pillar to our [Fairness for Farmers](https://nfu.org/fairness-for-farmers/) campaign. Further awards through MPPEP are expected in the coming weeks.

**NFU PRESIDENT LAREW ATTENDING UNITED NATIONS SUMMIT ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

Leaders from around the world are meeting in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, from November 6 through November 18, 2022, for climate negotiations known as COP27. COP, abbreviated from “Conference of the Parties,” refers to the annual summit of the 197 countries that agreed to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992.

The parties, which include the United States, ratified the treaty to address “dangerous human interference with the climate system” and stabilize levels of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere. The U.N. climate body convenes these governments annually to discuss how to address climate change. This will be the 27th meeting of the parties, hence COP27.

NFU President Larew will attend the summit, in part due to NFU’s membership in the World Farmers’ Organisation (WFO). On November 12, President Larew will serve as a panelist for a discussion led by USDA Secretary Vilsack on USDA’s Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities. Six Farmers Union states are directly involved in projects that were selected in USDA’s first round of funding for that initiative.

The discussion will be an important opportunity for NFU to highlight how Farmers Union state divisions and Farmers Union members are playing a leading role in addressing climate change. A greater emphasis on agriculture during COP 27 will help to highlight the importance of establishing economically viable climate solutions for farmers.

**2022 ELECTION RESULTS**

The 2022 midterm elections are finally behind us, and the results will have major implications for agriculture policy in the coming years, including the 2023 Farm Bill.

In the Senate, Michael Bennet (D-CO) and Chuck Grassley (R-IA) - both of whom are members of the Agriculture Committee - won their races comfortably. The biggest news was John Fetterman’s victory in Pennsylvania, and he will succeed retiring Sen. Pat Toomey (R), marking the lone Senate pickup for Democrats.

Sen. Raphael Warnock (D-GA) will head to a run-off against GOP candidate Herschel Walker on December 6. Depending on how the Senate races in Arizona and Nevada end up, this run-off election could determine who controls the U.S. Senate in the 118th Congress.

On the House Agriculture Committee, many members who were facing strong challenges prevailed, including Reps. Abigail Spanberger (D-VA 7), Angie Craig (D-MN 2), Sanford Bishop (D-GA 2), Sharice Davids (D-KS 3), Jahana Hayes (D-CT 5), Marcy Kaptur (D-OH 9), Don Bacon (R-NE 2), and Brad Finstad (R-MN 1). Three members lost their bids for re-election: Reps. Al Lawson (D-FL 5), Cindy Axne (D-IA 3), and Sean Patrick Maloney (D-NY 18).

As of November 10, several races remain too close to call, including the Arizona and Nevada Senate and statewide races.

There were many state-level races with ties to Farmers Union as well. Democratic governors in Michigan and Wisconsin, Gretchen Whitmer and Tony Evers, secured their re-elections with larger margins than in 2018, and Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly also won re-election for a second term. In Minnesota, Democratic-Farmer-Labor (DFL) Gov. Tim Walz won re-election as did Attorney General Keith Ellison. Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro (D) handily won his gubernatorial election against Doug Mastriano (R).

In the Southeast, Republicans did very well at the state level. Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp won re-election by roughly 7 points, and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis defeated Charlie Crist by 19 points. Republican Sen. Marco Rubio won re-election against former Congresswoman Val Demmings.

All told, the widely expected “red wave” did not materialize in the way many pollsters and pundits predicted. Given that several House and Senate races remain to be called, a narrow GOP House majority appears to be the most likely outcome.

With razor thin margins in both chambers, compromise will likely be key to a path forward for any legislation. This could lead to a strongly bipartisan effort to pass the 2023 Farm Bill. NFU will be closely monitoring the final results from the election, and we’ll certainly have more to report about the 2023 Farm Bill process in the weeks and months ahead.