



NATIONAL GRANGE

OF THE ORDER OF PATRONS OF HUSBANDRY

American Values. Hometown Roots.

View from the Hill



POLICY UPDATES and ISSUE NEWS

OCTOBER 2022 WRAP-UP

WASHINGTON OVERVIEW

Elections Fast Approaching

Washington has been quiet in October with both the House and Senate out of town for the majority of the month campaigning for the midterm election on November 8th. Control of both the House and Senate are up for grabs with tight races across the nation. The results of the election will have major impacts on the contours of legislation for the next two years and also shape the last few months of 2022 as the current Congress finishes out the current session. To learn about how to register and vote in your state, information can be found at <https://vote.gov/>

If Republicans take control of either the House or the Senate, Democrats are likely to rush to pass as many priorities as they can during their final months of total control in 2022. Priorities are likely to include funding the government for another year, passing the National Defense Authorization Act, spending related to the ongoing war in Ukraine, codification of same sex marriage laws, elections reforms, a ban on congressional stock trading, executive branch and judicial confirmations, and more. Of interest to the National Grange, legislation on issues such as concentration in cattle markets, railroad shipping troubles, voluntary carbon credits in agriculture, expanded coverage for early cancer detection through Medicare, and more.

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

Inflation Hikes Price of Holiday Meals

Shoppers are adjusting their holiday food shopping to address rising food costs according to FMI-The Food Industry Association. Here are some ways the 71% of shoppers concerned about inflation are adjusting to cost concerns:

- 28% are looking for deals
- 21% are buying more store brands
- 17% are sharing menu responsibilities such as potluck dishes
- 17% are substituting more affordable options
- Interestingly, 45% of shoppers are more concerned about the price of holiday meals than travel or gifts

USDA Intervenes in Farm Debt

USDA and Secretary Vilsack are unrolling plans for the \$3.1 billion provided by the Inflation Reduction Act to assist USDA farm loan borrowers whose direct or guaranteed loans are considered “distressed”. A separate \$2.2

billion from the IRA will go to producers who have experienced discrimination through USDA's lending programs. USDA is seeking public comment on how to best implement these assistance mandates.

Study Looks at Foreign Land Ownership

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) is planning to conduct a farmland ownership study to focus on several key questions raised by lawmakers, producers and national security experts. The study will address the following:

- What is known about the extent of and trends in foreign investment of domestic ag land?
- How does USDA's Farm Service Agency collect data on foreign investment in U.S. land and how does FSA ensure data reliability?
- What procedures are in place to ensure disclosure of foreign acquired, sold and transferred land?
- Are there standards to ensure land acquired through a U.S. company is accurately disclosed as a foreign investment?
- What improvements could be made to strengthen reporting of foreign investment in agricultural land?
- What government agencies should be partnering to ensure accurate disclosure?

Support Agriculture Research

The National Grange and 87 food, agriculture, academic and producer groups called on the appropriations committees in Congress to support increased investments in a broad suite of research, education and extension programs at USDA.

HEALTH CARE

Food as a Medicine?

The recent White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health, the Rockefeller Foundation, American Heart Association and Kroger announced their food as medicine research initiative. The initiative is in line with the White House's national food strategy that calls for testing the use of medically tailored meals through Medicare and Medicaid. FDA meanwhile, has pledged to work toward reducing diet-related diseases by giving consumers more information about what they're eating and pressuring food companies to reformulate products, actions that are key elements of the White House's new national food strategy.

Guidance for New Pneumonia Vaccines

The National Grange joined several patient and medical groups to request guidance from the CDC on whether previously vaccinated patients age 65 and older are eligible for two new and improved pneumonia vaccine options as the winter flu and pneumonia season approaches.

Physician Fees for Telehealth

The National Grange and 53 patient groups filed comments with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to support physician fees that would utilize a tailored combination of virtual and in-person care. Telehealth visits increased 63-fold during the pandemic.

Bring Farm Youth into Mental Health Conversations

Considerable research has centered on farm stress but it's been predominately focused on adults. Youth with farm responsibilities have largely been left out of studies and mental health conversations. The Farm Adolescent

and Adult Mental Health Study at the University of Illinois is now in year two of the five -year program. A collaborative group, the Progressive Agriculture Foundation, convened a roundtable focused on farm youth mental health. Roundtable participants discovered specific stressors are common to farm youth:

- Weather
- Family finances
- Negative interactions with those who have disconnect with agriculture
- Pressure to carry on farming tradition
- Inability to participate in extracurricular activities

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Streamline Permitting for Broadband Buildout

Senate Commerce Committee ranking member Roger Wicker (R-MS) and House Energy and Commerce Committee ranking member Cathy Rogers McMorris (R-WA) have asked the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to streamline the permitting process for some of the broadband buildouts subsidized with billions of taxpayer dollars. NTIA is allocating most of the \$65 billion from the infrastructure act package. Wicker and McMorris want states to work with local governments to reduce buildout barriers by reducing red tape, using existing infrastructure, promoting dig-once policies, and cost-effective access to poles, conduits, easements and rights of ways. The National Grange has filed several comments with the NTIA advocating these same policies.

TRANSPORTATION

Continued White House Engagement Necessary

The National Grange, members of the Agriculture Transportation Working Group, and members of the retail industry (over 260 total) have urged President Biden and key administration officials to continue to work diligently with the railroads and railroad unions to get contracts ratified. One major union has rejected the administration-negotiated agreement and there are concerns that others may follow.

PERSPECTIVE

“ No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted. ~ **Aesop** ”

“ You cannot do kindness too soon, for you never know how soon it will be too late. ~ **Ralph Waldo Emerson** ”

“ Remember there’s no such thing as a small act of kindness. Every act creates a ripple with no logical end. ~ **Scott Adams** ”

“ Kindness and politeness are not overrated at all. They’re underused. ~ **Tommy Lee Jones** ”

“ Sometimes it takes only one act of kindness and caring to change a person’s life. ~ **Jackie Chan** ”