

Rural Development and Financial Security Committee

Chairman: Director Jon Hagler, Missouri

Committee Report

February 6, 2013 | NASDA Winter Policy Conference | Reston, Virginia

The Committee was called to order by committee chairman Jon Hagler. Twenty-seven states were in attendance.

Plenary Presentation by Jon Baselice on Agricultural Labor and Immigration:

Jon Baselice, Legislative Assistant for U.S. Senator Marco Rubio, addressed the committee on legislative activities related to immigration and agricultural labor. Baselice discussed the importance of an agriculture labor program that works, citing the serious flaws with the H-2A program. During Member discussion, NASDA Members raised the challenges facing a broad spectrum of agricultural sectors. The need for a legal workforce, especially in areas that have low unemployment was emphasized, as was the fact that the jobs filled by immigrant workers often require significant and highly specialized skills.

Member Discussion:

Transportation: Members discussed a number of transportation-related challenges facing agriculture. Commissioner Strain of Louisiana emphasized the need to continue to support legislative efforts to address waterway maintenance funding, specifically Rep. Boustany's (LA) RAMP Act. Director de Yong of Montana, discussed the challenges associated with releasing water from upstream reservoirs, given the extreme weather conditions of recent years.

Members of the committee also emphasized the importance of ensuring agricultural products can be transported by other modes as well, such as rail and highways. Commissioner Reviczky of Connecticut discussed the importance of Congress addressing the need for more uniform weight limits.

Disaster and Drought: Members discussed the impact drought has had on agricultural producers, particularly livestock producers. Members discussed the importance of NRCS, addressing highway weight limit issues to facilitate the hauling of hay across state lines, the release of CRP acres, and the positive impact USDA's streamlined disaster declaration process had on producers.

Dairy: Members discussed the importance of an effective dairy safety net. Members mentioned there may be changes to the National Milk Producers Federation with regard to the supply management component of their proposal.

Consideration of Policy Amendments and Action Items:

Policy Amendments – The committee recommended the following Policy Amendments:

- Policy Amendment 3: Estate Tax (Troxler, NC)

Action Items– The committee recommended the following Action Items:

- Action Item G: Uniform Agricultural Truck Weighting Policy (NEASDA; Commissioner Reviczky, CT)
- Action Item H(a): Immigration Reform (WASDA; Commissioner Salazar, CO)