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OKLAHOMA FARM BUREAU

Perspective

February 3, 2017

Congressional Action Tour registration open through Feb. 24

Oklahoma Farm Bureau members will interact with key Trump Administration leaders, as well as Oklahoma's Congressional delegation, during the OKFB Congressional Action Tour March 28-April 2, 2017 in Washington, D.C.

With a new administration in the White House, trip attendees will have the unique opportunity to hear directly from leaders in the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Attendees also will hear from Oklahoma's Congressional delegation including Sens. Jim Inhofe and James Lankford, and Reps. Jim Bridenstine, Markwayne Mullin, Frank Lucas, Tom Cole and Steve Russell, who will outline their priorities under the new administration.

Other trip highlights include a legislative reception with Oklahoma Congressmen and their staff, and a policy briefing from the American Farm Bureau Federation.

Closing out the trip, members will travel to Annapolis, Maryland, for a dinner on the Chesapeake Bay, and tours of the



Oklahoma Farm Bureau members visit with Sen. Jim Inhofe during a legislative reception during last year's Congressional Action Tour in Washington, D.C.

Historic Naval Academy and the Maryland State House.

Participants are responsible for making their own travel arrangements. To register for the trip, submit the completed registra-

tion form and full payment to the OKFB Public Policy Department by February 24. The registration form can be found on the OKFB website. For more information, contact Tasha Duncan at 405-530-2681.

2017 Legislative Preview: A new era

By John Collison, OKFB Vice President of Public Policy

After eight years of fighting off overreach from the federal government, November brought a new era for farmers and ranchers. Under the Donald Trump administration, we now have allies – rather than adversaries – in Washington. The nominations of Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt for EPA administrator and Sonny Perdue for Secretary of Agriculture give the agricultural community a seat at the table in policy discussions.

The changes in Washington are positive, no doubt, but the challenges Oklahoma is meeting as a state are undeniable. Facing a nearly \$900 million budget shortfall, state revenue problems again will cast an over-

whelming shadow on this year's session. Everything from farming exemptions to ad valorem tax increases and expansions are to be talked about as lawmakers tackle the extreme budget crisis. Several bills have been filed concerning ad valorem tax increases, as cities and towns look for alternative sources of funding. Maybe cities and towns have a spending problem, rather than a revenue problem? The purpose of ad valorem tax is not to raise revenue for cities and towns. Municipalities, along with many other entities in Oklahoma must evaluate their spending habits, and look to the available and intended revenue in order to pay their bills.

For years, farmers and ranchers have enjoyed a sales tax exemption on the purchase of inputs like feed, seed and fertilizer. We have defended the exemption for years, but now expect it to be on the table in budget considerations. Lawmakers must understand the importance of the sales tax exemption on the production of food and fiber in Oklahoma; we will make every effort to educate them on this issue.

Outside of the budget crisis, education and teacher salaries are one of the biggest topics of conversation. Following the defeat of SQ 779, many legislators have proposed various versions of teacher pay raises.

(Continued on page four)

Oklahoma County Farm Bureau donates \$1,000 to Urban Harvest



Dennis Lambring (middle), Oklahoma County Farm Bureau treasurer, presents a \$1,000 check to Urban Harvest. Photo courtesy of the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma.

Oklahoma County Farm Bureau recently donated \$1,000 to Urban Harvest, a sustainable gardening program of the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma.

Dennis Lambring, Oklahoma County Farm Bureau treasurer, visited the Regional Food Bank January 17 in Oklahoma City to deliver the donation.

The Urban Harvest program includes three acres of organic gardens at the Regional Food Bank's headquarters in southwest Oklahoma City. The program teaches children from low-income backgrounds about nutrition and gardening. The four central goals of the Urban Harvest program include agricultural education, fresh food production, community outreach and ecological conservation. The fresh, healthy fruits and vegetables produced year-

round are distributed to low-income senior and childhood nutritional programs. Oklahoma County Farm Bureau has supported these programs for the last four years.

In an effort to include more outreach, Urban Harvest also provides assistance to partner gardens with educational information and donations of seedlings. In addition, the program engages children with limited resources in the food cycle and growing process on-site at five after-school snack sites and 32 Kids Cafés, an afterschool and summer program that provides food, mentoring, tutoring, and a variety of other activities to approximately 6,000 at-risk children in central and western Oklahoma.

To learn more about the Regional Food Bank or the Urban Harvest program, visit regionalfoodbank.org.

Oklahoma Farm Bureau honors nine state leaders with 2016 Champion Award

Nine of Oklahoma agriculture's top advocates will receive the 2016 Oklahoma Farm Bureau Champion Award during the OKFB Legislative Leadership Conference March 6-7 at the Embassy Suites Hotel in downtown Oklahoma City.

Presented by the OKFB board of directors, the award honors state leaders and lawmakers who went above and beyond to defend agriculture and rural Oklahoma during the 2016 legislative session.

"Representing thousands of farmers and ranchers across our state, Oklahoma Farm Bureau is committed to furthering agriculture and rural Oklahoma," said Tom Buchanan, OKFB president. "We sincerely appreciate the leadership and efforts of this group during the 2016 legislative session."

The 2016 OKFB Champion Award recipients include Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt, Senate President Pro Tem Mike Schulz, Speaker Charles McCall, Sen. Don Barrington, Sen. A.J. Griffin, Sen. James Leewright, Sen. Bryce Marlatt, Rep. Casey Murdock and Rep. Harold Wright.

The award recipients were nominated by county Farm Bureaus and the OKFB board of directors.

Oklahoma Farm Bureau Online



Winter 2017 Issue of Oklahoma Country

Check your mailboxes for the next issue of *Oklahoma Country*! The Winter 2017 issue will be delivered soon. You'll have the chance to read a feature story about this year's Farm Family of the Year, the first installment in a series looking back through OKFB history, a convention review and much more. Watch for the digital version of the issue on the OKFB website.



Farm Bureau Week

Farm Bureau Week is only a few weeks away! During the week of Feb. 20, Farm Bureau members will host different activities and events to help promote Farm Bureau within their communities. If you would like to submit your county's activities, please contact Clarissa Walton at clarissa.walton@okfb.org. Make sure to keep up with the latest news on the OKFB Facebook page.



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Perdue a strong voice for agriculture, AFBF president says

Courtesy of OKAgPolicy

Finalizing his Cabinet only days before his inauguration, President-elect Donald Trump has nominated Sonny Perdue, a former Georgia governor, for secretary of agriculture.

Perdue was raised on a row farm in rural Georgia. He holds a doctorate in veterinary medicine, but spent much of his career running his own company which focuses on agriculture and transportation. He served two terms as Georgia governor from 2003 to 2011.

American Farm Bureau President Zippy Duvall, a native of Georgia, praised Perdue's nomination.

"Gov. Perdue will provide the strong voice that agriculture needs in the new administration," Duvall said, in a statement. "I've seen firsthand his commitment to the business of agriculture as we worked together on issues facing farmers and ranchers in our home state of Georgia."

Duvall became friends with Perdue while serving as president of Georgia Farm Bureau, he said during remarks at the AFBF Annual Convention in early January.

As governor of Georgia, Duvall said Perdue was willing to work with farmers and ranchers.

"He told me and he told our farmers, 'You don't have to come in the back door anymore, you come in our front door,'" Duvall said.

A native of rural Georgia, Duvall said Perdue understands the challenges currently plaguing American farmers and ranchers.

"He is a businessman who recognizes the impact immigration reform, trade agreements and regulation have on a farmer's bottom line and ability to stay in business from one season to the next," Duvall said, in his statement. "When farmers and ranchers are free to access cutting-edge technologies,

reach new markets and make decisions that protect their businesses and resources, we all are better off."

Duvall also pledged to work toward confirmation of the agriculture secretary nominee.

"It's our job, after he picks that person, to help them get appointed and be a resource to them so they'll call on American Farm Bureau as a resource to lead them in the right direction and in what's right for American agriculture," Duvall said, at the AFBF Annual Meeting.

Nominated just two days before the inauguration, Perdue will have little time to prepare for the new position that manages nearly 90,000 employees and a budget of \$150 billion.

Perdue must face a confirmation hearing before the Senate Agriculture Committee before being confirmed on the Senate floor.

Reminder: OKFB encourages members to sign up for action alerts

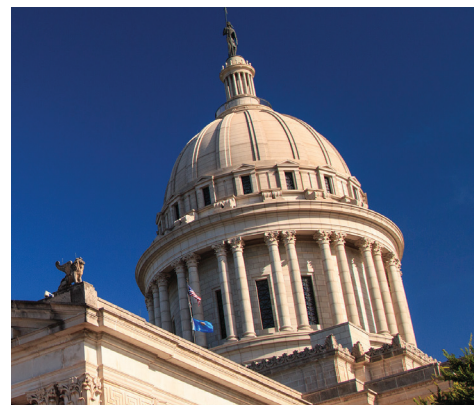
Oklahoma Farm Bureau has launched a new action alert tool to help members advocate for agriculture and rural Oklahoma at the state Capitol. Members now can sign up to receive an alert when legislators need to be contacted about an issue.

To receive action alerts, sign up online at okagpolicy.org/action-center or text START to 405-400-3011. When members need to contact legislators regarding a specific issue, the member will receive an alert along with information on the issue and how to contact his or her legislator.

"Our success as an organization centers on member engagement," said John Collison, vice president of public policy. "We encourage all members to sign up and utilize the action alert tool. A phone call from a constituent can make all the difference."

The tool also will provide members the ability to receive a weekly e-newsletter, track legislation, view legislator scorecards, and comment on federal regulations.

For more information, contact the OKFB Public Policy Department at 405-530-2681.



Member Benefits

Cimarron Trailers

Looking for a new trailer with several customizable options? Cimarron Trailers is a network of individuals committed to creating the best equine and livestock transportation in the industry and puts emphasis on highly customizable trailers for their customers. Better yet, they offer OKFB members a \$250 discount for livestock or cargo trailers or a \$400 discount for horse, low-profile stock and club-calf trailers. Visit cimarrontrailers.com to learn more.

www.okfarmbureau.org/benefits

Calendar

State Legislature Convenes

February 6 • Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Contact: John Collison (405) 523-2539

2017 FUSION Conference

February 10-13 • Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Contact: Zac Swartz (405) 205-0070

Farm Bureau Week

February 20-24 • State of Oklahoma
Contact: Marcia Irvin (405) 523-2405

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OKFB to host Legislative Leadership Conference March 6-7 in Oklahoma City

Oklahoma Farm Bureau leaders from across the state will gather in Oklahoma City March 6-7 for the annual OKFB Legislative Leadership Conference.

Held at the Embassy Suites Hotel in downtown Oklahoma City, the two-day conference will feature state and federal agricultural policy updates, a reception with

state leaders and lawmakers, and more. OKFB also will present its 2016 Champion Awards to nine state leaders.

More event details will be released as they become available. Be sure to check the OKFB website and social media for the latest updates.

Four insights into a Pruitt-led EPA

Courtesy of OKAgPolicy

Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt faced a confirmation hearing before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee for administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency on Jan. 18.

Pruitt was introduced by both Oklahoma U.S. Senators Jim Inhofe and James Lankford, who praised the nominee for his work in Oklahoma to protect the environment and fight federal overreach. Below are five key highlights of yesterday's hearing that shone a light on a potential Pruitt-led EPA.

It's possible to protect the environment and grow the economy.

As reiterated throughout the hearing, Pruitt said the narrative that pro-energy means anti-environment must change. He also emphasized the importance of analyzing the economic impact of environmental regulations. The U.S. made "great progress" in the past few decades in protecting air and water while still growing the economy, he said.

Americans don't trust the EPA.

Several committee members, mainly from strong agriculture states, said landowners, farmers, ranchers and small businessmen do not trust the EPA. For eight years, those

regulated by the EPA have felt as though the agency does not listen to their concerns. Pruitt said he is committed to being "open and transparent" in his role as EPA administrator. In building "collaborative cooperation" between states and the EPA during the rule-making process, Pruitt said he will work to restore confidence in the agency.

States should have more power.

Pruitt said he believes the U.S. will have better air, better water quality and a better environment when the EPA works as a partner with states, not as an adversary. Individual states have better expertise on how to regulate the environment than the federal government. However, Pruitt said "recalcitrant" states should be reprimanded when not enforcing federal regulations.

The EPA will follow laws set by Congress.

The job of the EPA administrator is to follow laws created by Congress, Pruitt said. He repeatedly emphasized his obligation to following the guidelines of Congress, and maintained his commitment to upholding the rule of law.

Legislative Preview

(Continued from page one)

While education traditionally has not been an OKFB policy priority, our Farm Bureau families have students in all 77 counties in both urban and rural school districts. Our membership this year made a point to bring up the education discussion at annual policymaking events and have expressed a vested interest in this topic.

Though we face many uphill battles this year, our presence at the state Capitol is stronger than ever. We were pleased to watch the election of three members of the Farm Bureau family – Sen. Chris Kidd, Sen. Lonnie Paxton and Sen. Roland Pederson – into the Oklahoma State Senate. We know each will represent the interests of agriculture and rural Oklahoma well. We're also excited to work alongside more than 30 members of the OKFB Caucus, a new organization for Farm Bureau members in the state Legislature.

As always, your participation in the legislative process is vital. This year, we've implemented a new legislative action alert system which allows you to easily contact your legislators when needed. We encourage you to sign up by texting START to 405-400-0311 or by visiting www.OKAgPolicy.org/action-center.

We look forward to seeing you at the OKFB Legislative Leadership Conference March 6-7. Thank you for the privilege of serving you and the agriculture industry at the state Capitol.