

PERSPECTIVE

June 5, 2020

OKFB Ag Fund supports candidates in primary elections, elects chair

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Ag Fund, the organization's political action committee, has endorsed 13 candidates and financially supported 41 candidates running for election in statewide, state Senate and state House races.

The OKFB Ag Fund board, comprised of farmers and ranchers from each OKFB district, met Thursday, May 28 to donate a total of \$39,000 to candidates and to choose candidates for endorsement.

Based on the recommendations of Farm Bureau members from across the state, the Ag Fund supports candidates who uphold the beliefs and values of rural Oklahoma. While the Ag Fund contributes financially to candidates, an endorsement is the highest level of support the Ag Fund committee gives to chosen candidates.

The Ag Fund has endorsed Todd Hiett, a candidate running for reelection as corporation commissioner.

Oklahoma Senate candidates receiving an endorsement from the Ag Fund include Larry Boggs, SD 7; Roland Pederson, SD 19; and Greg Treat, SD 47.

The Ag Fund endorsed nine Oklahoma House candidates including Rick West, HD 3; Jim Grego, HD 17; Dell Kerbs, HD 26; Kyle Hilbert, HD 29; Chad Caldwell, HD 40; Jay Steagall, HD 43; Todd Russ, HD 55; Kenton Patzkowsky, HD 61; and Jon Echols, HD 90.

Jackson County Farm Bureau member Keff Fely was chosen to serve as chairman by fellow members of the Ag Fund board. Other members include Leon Richards, Texas County, District One; Wayne Taggart, Caddo County, District Three; Roger Fisher, Cotton County, District Four; Terry Caldwell, Choctaw County, District Five; Charlie Coblentz, Mayes



Leon Richards, Texas County Farm Bureau, shares with fellow members of the Ag Fund Board the thoughts from members of district one of the candidates in their district.

County, District Six; Steve Clark, Alfalfa County, District Seven; LeRoy Odell, Pottawatomie County, District Eight; and Sue Farmer, Lincoln County, District Nine.

“So much of our day-to-day lives on the farm are impacted by the decisions that are made by the state Legislature and statewide elected officials,” said Keff Fely, OKFB Ag Fund chair. “The OKFB Ag Fund gives us as farmers and ranchers the ability to support candidates who know and understand the realities of how we do what we do and why we do it.”

The OKFB Ag Fund is supported by voluntary contributions from OKFB members across the state as an optional portion of their membership dues. The Ag Fund board will meet to consider further support following Oklahoma's June 30 primary election and again after the Aug. 25 runoff election.

YF&R to host summer conference July 10-12 in Oklahoma City area

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers will host its annual summer conference July 10-12 in Oklahoma City.

More details regarding the conference will be released soon on our website at okfarmbureau.org and on social media.

For more information, contact Zac Swartz at (405) 523-2300.

As wheat harvest begins, share your harvest experience

As Oklahoma wheat producers across the state begin the whirlwind process of harvest, we would love for you to share your photos with us!

From in the cab or in the field, we would love to see your photos showing the ups and downs, beautiful Oklahoma sunsets or anything else harvest related. Photos submitted along with any details you provide will be posted to our social media as a chance to share how producers are [#StillFarming](https://www.instagram.com/StillFarming) during this unusual time.

To submit your photo, email it to news@okfb.org along with your name, your farm name, the county the photo was taken in and what harvest has been like for you and your family to this point.

Five takeaways from OKFB's CFAP webinar with Rep. Lucas

Congressman Frank Lucas of Oklahoma's 3rd Congressional District provided insight into the USDA's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program and how it affects farmers and ranchers during a live webinar with Oklahoma Farm Bureau on Wednesday, May 27.

Lucas had an opportunity visit with U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue on Friday, May 22, and he shared several things that he discussed with the secretary. Lucas said he came away encouraged by his conversation with the secretary.

"I have a great deal of confidence in Sec. Perdue," Lucas said. "He's a mature, stable, calm individual in a really tough position right now."

Here are the top takeaways from Lucas' discussion with OKFB President Rodd Moesel about the CFAP program.



Farmers and ranchers who want to participate in CFAP should act quickly

Lucas encouraged Oklahoma farmers and ranchers who are thinking about participating in the CFAP program to **visit with their county FSA staff** as soon as possible to begin **assembling the necessary information** to apply for the program.

Lucas also encouraged producers whose agricultural products may not be covered by CFAP at as high a level as they would like to get into the USDA's system in case additional money from the Commodity Credit Corporation funds or additional congressional funding become available.

"I would say to my neighbors back home: maybe some of you in certain parts of the state didn't participate in the drought relief programs in 2014," Lucas said. "Maybe you haven't participated in these programs before. Maybe your sector isn't covered right now under the 5% drop language. You need to talk to your local FSA folks."

"Don't say 'This isn't worth my time.' You have to go be a part of the process now in the hopes that if, and when, more resources come, you're in a position to participate."

Signup for the CFAP program runs May 26 - August 28.



Agriculture is fortunate to have received the current level of funding for agriculture support programs

Lucas said he discussed with Sec. Perdue the funding levels for direct support for farmers and ranchers available in the CFAP program.

Lucas said the Trump administration feels like \$50 billion is needed to assist production agriculture through the pandemic-related market downturn, but had to take the funding levels passed by Congress, which included \$16 billion in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act, with another \$14 billion to become available through the Commodity Credit Corporation after June.

"The secretary needed \$50 billion, (Congress) gave him \$16 billion," Lucas said. "He could come up with another \$14 billion, but he couldn't touch it until July. So that basically created the flow of the program we have now."

In regards to the \$250,000 payment limit, Lucas said while he agrees the limit is too low for modern production agriculture, he has direct experience with defending payment limits during his work on the 2014 farm bill.

"I've been through enough farm bill wars to know how hard protecting the \$125,000 number has been, let alone the secretary using twice that number, \$250,000," Lucas said.



If you missed the live webinar of Oklahoma Farm Bureau President Rodd Moesel and Rep. Frank Lucas discussing details of the new CFAP program, visit okfb.news/LucasCFAP.

Hard red winter wheat support may not have been part of the initial CFAP program, but there's room to discuss it for future programs

Many farmers and ranchers were surprised to find that Oklahoma's most important crop – hard red winter wheat – was not included in the CFAP program when it was announced.

Lucas said he brought up the lack of hard red winter wheat support with Perdue, and the secretary told him that the numbers his economists had presented did not show the necessary price drop to trigger a need for support.

“He said, ‘My economists believe that you weren't impacted by the necessary 5% drop,’” Lucas said of his conversation with Perdue. “I said, ‘Mr. Secretary, the folks in the wheat industry and the numbers I've seen indicated that there was a 17% drop – a relatively brief drop, but 17%.’ His response was, ‘Well, then, you work with your wheat producers and their representatives, you (get) the numbers that justify participation, and bring those to me.’”

Lucas said he is **optimistic that Perdue could add hard red winter wheat** support if numbers prove the price drop for the commodity was dramatic enough to hit the necessary program trigger.

“I think if we can produce statistics, we have a chance at being addressed in one of these next tranches,” Lucas said. “He didn't say, ‘No.’ He said, ‘Prove that you qualify.’”



There will be changes coming to address how the United States food and fiber system functions and operates

Lucas also addressed pricing challenges being experienced in the livestock and animal protein sectors, including processing plant closures and the fundamental shift in American food consumption from restaurants to home.

“This has been an awakening, I think, for our fellow Americans,” Lucas said of recent disruptions in the food supply chain. “You might say a sobering experience.”

Lucas said he has filed bills and he is still working on legislation to address issues in the food and fiber system that have arisen during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lucas identified areas such as the **limited number of companies involved in the majority of the U.S. packing operations, foreign ownership of meat packing companies, and ways to help smaller and intermediate meat processors as the places he is looking to address with legislation.**

“The biggest challenge is how do we make sure that the little guys, or the intermediate guys, can get access to that USDA-inspected stamp?” Lucas said. “Right now, we have a state inspection program and a federal. State inspection is as good as any federally-inspected stamp. I'm completely

confident of that. But the problem is you can't sell that product across state lines – you need that federal stamp.”

Lucas also said he wants to see the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture serve on the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, an idea he proposed to Perdue. The committee oversees foreign investment in the nation, and Lucas said food is a matter of national security.

“Food security is just as important as who buys satellite manufacturers or tank builders or bomb or bullet manufactures or software manufacturers,” Lucas said.



There could be more farm support programs yet to come beyond the initial CFAP

Throughout the webinar, Lucas said he believes there will be additional funds available from Congress at some point to help farmers and ranchers, not to mention the \$14 billion that will be available from the CCC later in the summer.

“Main bottom line in my discussion with the secretary was: We spent the \$16 billion in a way to try and not only maximize the help, but to create a window with the next \$14 billion – and if we in Congress step up to the plate with another \$20 billion – to be able to utilize that, too.”

Lucas also noted that there are more Oklahoma-grown commodities, including rye, peanuts, feed barley, alfalfa and more that could need additional support if a 5% price drop can be proven.

Payne County YF&R serves community in time of need



Payne County Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers members recently volunteered at Our Daily Bread Food and Resource Center in Stillwater. While there, members cleaned, stocked shelves, filled boxes with food and loaded boxes of groceries for customers.

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State board members tour local nonprofit Restore OKC

Members of our Oklahoma Farm Bureau state board toured Restore OKC May 21 to learn about the organization's mission of serving the northeastern Oklahoma City community by providing much-needed food options, along with student opportunities, for our fellow Oklahomans.

To better serve their community, Restore OKC follows three ways to cultivate change: growing food, growing jobs and growing friendship.

Board members learned about Restore OKC's community garden, greenhouse, aquaculture program and market in addition to their plans to add chickens and goats. They also got to see the tractor that the Oklahoma Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture and Farm Credit of Western Oklahoma donated to the organization a few months ago.

To learn more information about Restore OKC and their mission to better serve the northeastern Oklahoma City community, visit restoreokc.org.



Restore OKC Director Caylee Dodson shows members of the OKFB state board the community garden.



District Five Director Gary Crawley looks at one of many vertical aquaculture towers Restore OKC uses in their greenhouse.



OKFB state board members look over the Kubota tractor donated in partnership with Oklahoma Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture and Farm Credit of Western Oklahoma.