

PERSPECTIVE

March 27, 2020

Pickens completes two year term on AFBF's Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee

After serving on the American Farm Bureau Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee for the past two years, Oklahoma Farm Bureau's own Rachel Pickens of Payne County Farm Bureau is finishing up her term. We are proud of the work she did in representing Oklahoma as she served and helped lead young agriculturalists across the country.

To learn more about Rachel's story, visit okfb.news/pickens20.

2021 AFBF FUSION Conference dates announced

The 2021 AFBF FUSION Conference is scheduled for March 12-15 in Portland, Oregon. The event will include breakout and keynote sessions, Collegiate Discussion Meet rounds and more. Further details about the event will be released later this summer.

Legislative Update: Farm Bureau's voice remains constant in unpredictable times



Even in uncertain times, Oklahoma Farm Bureau will remain the steady and unwavering voice for farmers, ranchers and rural Oklahomans. Many businesses and organizations – even the state Legislature and Congress –

are tampering down operations, but we know and understand that work on the farm never stops. That's why Farm Bureau leaders and staff will continue to vigilantly monitor the issues that impact OKFB members. **Continued on next page.**

Perspective publishing schedule to adapt, adjust around ongoing COVID-19 pandemic

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau communications department will continue to share the story of Oklahoma agriculture and Oklahoma Farm Bureau as the world continues to adapt and adjust to life with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

However, our *Perspective* newsletter publishing schedule may shift or change to work around changing workplace protocols,

the availability of our publishing partners and content availability. We will continue to publish *Perspective* as possible, but we are continually assessing the situation and we will adapt the newsletter to meet the realities in the coming weeks. This may include putting our newsletter on hold until we can resume normal work schedules.

Farm Bureau members and the public can always see our latest news on our

website at okfarmbureau.org and through our social media channels, which primarily include Facebook and Twitter. Please visit us on any of these digital platforms to get the latest updates from OKFB.

We appreciate your understanding and your help as we work together to advocate for agriculture and rural Oklahoma.

THE 2020 CENSUS IS HERE!



**OKLAHOMA
FARM BUREAU**

Legislative Update: Farm Bureau's voice remains constant in unpredictable times *continued*

Facing increasing concerns over public health, the Oklahoma House of Representatives on March 16 took unprecedented action to authorize the Republican and Democratic caucuses to designate a single proxy representative to vote on behalf of others in an emergency situation. It is unclear if and when House members might use this proxy voting option or if such action would pass judicial review.

In a disturbing turn of events, entrance to the state Capitol was restricted on March 17 to include only legislators, their staff, credentialed media and state employees. After a full day of legislative actions behind closed doors on Tuesday, both chambers adjourned to a yet-to-be-determined future date. The members of the public currently remain prohibited from entering the state Capitol building. Though we understand certain precautions must be taken to protect public health, any legislative action must remain open and transparent. The ongoing adjournment could be days or weeks, but the building must be open to the public when legislative activity resumes.

OKFB also has been working closely with Oklahoma's congressional delegation on behalf of farmers, ranchers and agribusinesses to safeguard the strength of the nation's food supply chain. With new closures, cancellations and movement restrictions seemingly every day, it becomes more important than ever for agriculture to have the support of elected officials.

As Farm Bureau members continue laboring each and every day to produce the food on which our nation depends, OKFB will never stop working for the interests of Oklahoma's farmers and ranchers. If you have any questions or concerns about issues you're facing, please contact your area OKFB field representative or the public policy staff.

What will the 2020 Census ask?

- How many people are living or staying in your home April 1, 2020?
- Whether the home is owned or rented.
- About the sex of each person in your home.
- About the age of each person in your home.
- About the race of each person in your home.
- About whether a person in your home is Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin.
- About the relationship of each person in your home.

Why does the 2020 Census matter?

A complete and accurate count is critical for you, your family and your community because the census provides critical data that is used in a number of ways. Leaders and lawmakers use the results to determine how to distribute an estimated \$675 billion in federal funds to states and communities for roads, schools, hospitals, emergency response services and much more. In fact, communities receive an estimated \$1,700 per year per person counted.

Census data also will be used to draw congressional and state legislative districts to ensure proper representation.

Is the 2020 Census safe?

During the 2020 Census, the Census Bureau will *never* ask you for your social security number, money or donations, anything on behalf of a political party, or your bank or credit card account numbers.

Remember: Your personal information is kept confidential. By law, the Census Bureau cannot release any information that identifies you personally. Your information is used for statistical purposes only.



AFBF highlights the immediate challenges facing the agriculture sector

American Farm Bureau has released its first assessment of the impact on farmers and ranchers in the wake of the national mitigation efforts to combat COVID-19.

In a letter to Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue, AFBF President Zippy Duvall pledged that “America’s farmers and ranchers will be with you every step of the way, doing all that we can to help you win this fight and to ensure the health, safety and prosperity of all America.”

USDA invited Farm Bureau to convey agricultural issues or concerns arising as the pandemic mitigation efforts and impact advance. Duvall said labor, supply chain issues and possible price manipulation topped the list of immediate issues farmers are raising with the national organization.

The letter, which will be updated regularly as new issues materialize, outlines concerns from Farm Bureau members across the country as national and local leaders take action to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and protect public health.

H-2A

With the State Department’s announcement to suspend all processing of new, non-emergency visa applications in Mexico, U.S. farms and ranches could

face a serious labor shortage at a critical time for planting and harvesting crops essential to the domestic food supply. U.S. agriculture depends on more than a quarter-million H-2A workers every year, and Farm Bureau is calling on the Administration to find a safe measure to ensure these skilled workers can come to our farms and ranches. AFBF along with members of the Agriculture Workforce Coalition also sent a letter to Secretary of State Pompeo to address these concerns.

Supply Chain

“As companies adopt social distancing policies in keeping with health directives, this mode of work could have a significant impact on the processing plants that drive America’s supply chain,” Duvall wrote.

Meat packing plants, dairy processors, ethanol plants and other processing facilities all play vital roles in delivering the food and fuel Americans will continue to depend on in the long days ahead. Additional impacts could include access to seed, fertilizer and crop protection tools farmers need to grow a healthy crop. In addition to calling for close monitoring of potential shutdowns or reduced hours at these facilities, Farm Bureau is also requesting that the current FMCSA Emergency Declaration

waiver to hours of service for food transportation be expanded to address the full agricultural supply chain.

Market Concerns

Maintaining stable and fair markets is especially critical at times like these. Duvall noted concerns from livestock producers regarding market manipulation and urged USDA to monitor the situation to protect ranchers and consumers alike from price manipulation. In the fresh produce market, growers have expressed concerns regarding possible dumping of products from other countries. “USDA should work with the appropriate Federal agencies in ensuring U.S. farmers are not unfairly disadvantaged during this unique period,” Duvall wrote.

Duvall also noted USDA’s unique role in urging rural America to take all the prescribed measures to “flatten the curve” and reduce the spread of COVID-19, and thanked Secretary Perdue for his leadership in addressing the crisis facing agriculture and rural America.

“We applaud your leadership and commitment and stand ready to work with you as our nation meets this unique challenge,” Duvall wrote.

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OKFB a proud sponsor of inaugural OYE Ag Mechanics contest March 10

At the first-ever Oklahoma Youth Expo Ag Mechanics contest March 10, 4-H and FFA members from across the state gathered to compete against one another with their metal projects built from scratch.

An opportunity to showcase agricultural mechanics programs from throughout the state, projects were required to fit into one of five categories: ag machinery and equipment, livestock equipment, outdoor recreation and convenience, wildlife equipment, trailers or decorative.

Grand Champion

Tracy Criner, Seth Campbell,
Jackson Cole and
Ryley Smith
Porter FFA

Reserve Grand Champion

Jordan Fitz, Josh Bay, John
Bay, and Jarek Fitz
Shattuck FFA

Bronze Medallion

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