

Advocacy Update – Special Edition



U.S. and Canadian ag issues were focus of groundbreaking SARL meeting

NAEDA Vice President of Government Relations Michael Williams and Canada West Equipment Dealers Association Executive Vice President John Schmeiser represented U.S. and Canadian equipment dealers at the 8th annual State Legislative Agriculture Chairs Summit (SARL). The meeting was held Jan. 15-17, in conjunction with AG CONNECT Expo 2010 in Orlando, Fla.

Williams and Schmeiser joined industry leaders and state and provincial legislative agriculture committee members from 46 states and 5 Canadian provinces at the meeting. Participants identified several issues facing ag and rural communities, considered solutions to widespread problems and shared how some concerns that had been raised at earlier summits were already being resolved in the two countries.

Topics as critical and diverse as the increasing burden of federal mandates, regulations related to air and water quality, animal agriculture, credit, endangered species, food safety, energy policy and cap and trade, new EPA directives overriding state control of water quality standards, and new penalties and proposed regulations covering dust, were part of the packed agenda. These issues provide daunting challenges for states and provinces already facing economic stress. Williams commented that SARL participants were acutely aware of the enormity of the challenges and very interested in learning how their colleagues in other states and provinces were addressing them so they could consider implementing similar, workable solutions in their area.

Discussing key trends in agriculture was also a major focus of the summit. For example, participants discussed the “sustainably grown” trend, sharing how buyers are increasingly seeking ways to purchase specialty products with lower carbon footprints. SARL participants considered model legislation to define “sustainably grown” products as agriculture that can be maintained without harming the environment while still providing viable income for farmers and rural communities.

Discussions also included ways to strengthen the agriculture economy of both the U.S. and Canada. Canadian Agriculture Minister, Gerry Ritz opened the event and shared his thoughts on common issues facing rural communities on both sides of the border. In spite of the challenges facing rural areas, he said there are new and exciting economic opportunities involved in the development of green, natural resource-based energies including biomass, biofuels, solar, and wind energy.

Many rural communities are well positioned to take advantage of the job creation and business-building opportunities that can result from such a focus on green industries, Ritz said, however he reminded attendees that it is vital that policy makers understand what is necessary to support the development of such businesses. The workshop “Renewable Energy and Economic Development” at the SARL meeting provided insights into these opportunities.

U.S. SARL participants were reminded that the voice of rural communities is strengthened by increased representation in

This invitation-only event brings together key industry representatives and the elected officials who can drive change.

the state legislature. Attendees reviewed how rural caucuses that have been formed in several states are providing a forum for state officials to work together to address issues unique to rural communities and agriculture businesses, particularly those dealing with animal agriculture and activists opposing livestock raising techniques.

U.S. attendees were also asked to participate in regional meetings of state legislative groups and were reminded how important it is that all rural residents participate in the 2010 U.S. census. State legislative districts, congressional districts and federal financial assistance programs are based upon the population count of the census and every member of rural areas need to be counted.

Williams commented that one of the most beneficial features of the SARL meeting is the networking opportunities it provides. He said this invitation-only event brings together key industry representatives and the elected officials who can drive change. In many cases, the elected officials seek out the opinions of individual industry representatives as the issues are being discussed. “The event gives invitees the invaluable opportunity to raise issues of concern with legislative decision makers who can make a difference.”

For more information about the 2010 SARL ag summit, visit www.agandruralleaders.org/LAC/2010/2010LAC.html.

With the resolution of disapproval ultimately having to be signed by the president, the realities of it becoming law are extremely slim.

action by EPA are underway in the House of Representatives, as Rep. Earl Pomeroy (D-ND) introduced the Save Our Energy Jobs Act (H.R. 4396) earlier this year.

NAEDA continues to monitor this issue for its potential negative impact on equipment sales should acreage shifts take place because of either regulations by EPA or legislation by Congress. ■



Resolution of disapproval seeks to halt EPA climate change regulation efforts

U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) introduced a resolution of disapproval in January to stop the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from continuing its efforts to regulate greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act. With nearly all Republican senators signing on as cosponsors, Sen. Murkowski also found three critical Democrats to join on the resolution. Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee Chair Blanche Lincoln (D-AR), who is currently

engulfed in a tough reelection campaign, Sen. Ben Nelson (D-NE) and Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-LA) are the Democratic senators to sign on.

With the resolution of disapproval ultimately having to be signed by the president, the realities of it becoming law are extremely slim. The president himself has said he supports attacking climate change through the legislative process, rather than through EPA regulation. Similar efforts to prohibit further

A companion reference is regularly updated in the Dealer Advocacy Center at www.naeda.com.

NAEDA notes

At the time of this writing, Congress is getting ready to return to work and try to complete work on major issues, including those we have identified below. The one unknown item thrown into the legislative equation on these issues is the results of the Massachusetts election of Scott Brown, a Republican, who now breaks the supermajority of the Democrats in the U.S. Senate. His election could significantly affect the outcome of these issues even as you read this article. NAEDA will pay close attention to the following items and keep you informed of happenings in future issues of *NAEDA Equipment Dealer* magazine and the *NAEDA Update* e-newsletter, as well as on our Web site (www.naeda.com).

Remember that all 435 members of the House and one-third of the Senate are up for re-election this fall. How House Speaker Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Reid protect their Democratic majorities in the fall election will affect how Congress moves forward on these issues this spring and summer. We believe the debate on some of these issues will now change due to the Massachusetts election, but the current priorities include:

- **Health care** – Closed door negotiations are taking place between House and Senate leaders on a compromise bill. The final results were expected to be made known in early February, but with the addition of the new senator, things may take a different course. Discussion points have centered on a government-run plan, size of subsidies to people to pay the cost for them to acquire insurance and the overall impact of these items on the budget.
- **Jobs** – The House has passed a jobs package that includes expenditures for infrastructure, but the Senate has yet to take up the issue. Jobs will likely become the top issue for Congress before this fall's election.
- **Financial regulations** – The House has passed legislation to further regulate financial institutions. Prospects of passage in the Senate are unclear at this time because of the new federal agency created and the unknown reactions of how this new agency would regulate financial products and the availability of credit. Available credit, of course, is crucial to business and the economy moving forward.
- **Climate change** – The House passed its version of its “Cap and Trade” bill (which imposes caps on greenhouse gases). The House version has been encountering resistance in the Senate. Whether the Senate will want to address this issue is yet to be seen given that it is such a controversial program. Its potential effects on the economy are yet unknown.
- **Taxes** – A number of tax provisions have either expired or are expected to expire in 2010 and 2011. The House did pass a “tax extender bill” that addressed both the estate tax and NAEDA's number one priority of extending equipment depreciation provisions to seven years from five years, but the Senate failed to act before its holiday recess. Congress needs to take action on these tax provisions to ensure stability to businesses and industry if they are to grow the economy.