

'The challenges today are much more nationwide in scope'

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Traditionally, there were starker regional differences within the AFBF over crop subsidies and other farm bill-related issues, said Stallman. "It's something that we used to have big fights over, but not anymore."

While the organization now has fewer internal disputes, it's facing greater external threats as the public is farther removed from the business of agriculture, and some outside groups want to change how the industry operates, he said.

National challenges

"The challenges today are much more nationwide in scope," Stallman said.

Controversies over pesticides, water, biotechnology, animal welfare and labor regulations have the AFBF on the defensive, but they've also given two underdog candidates hope for winning the organization's presidency.

"There's a recognition now that issues are national and not regional. These are all issues we face in Oregon and have for a long time," said Barry Bushue, who is the Oregon Farm Bureau's president and the American Farm Bureau's vice president.

Bushue and Kevin Rogers, president of the Arizona Farm Bureau, expect that the West's familiarity with contentious farm issues and federal regulations will improve their chances of winning.

Uphill battle

At the same time, their campaigns face an uphill battle precisely because they come from the AFBF's Western region.

While the experts contacted for this article maintain that every candidate has a fair shot, the reality is that only one candidate from the West — Allan Grant of California, who served in the late 1970s — has ever won the AFBF presidency.

Because they have the largest number of Farm Bureau members, the Southern and Midwest regions also have the most voting delegates and have dominated the presidency since the AFBF's inception in 1919.

"It's probably the biggest challenge for Barry and myself," said Rogers. "Barry and I are probably at a disadvantage."

A large swath of the West is owned by the federal government, which has led to more conflicts over grazing, water management and endangered species than farmers face elsewhere in the nation.

"It seems like we are putting out a lot of fires," Rogers said.

Bushue also comes from a state where the legislature and executive branch are controlled by Democrats, who are generally more prone to regulate agriculture and business than lawmakers in conserva-

AFBF presidential candidates at a glance



Barry Bushue

Hometown: Boring, Ore.

Age: 65

Education: Bachelor of Science in Biology, Oregon State University

Family: Wife, Helen, and three children

Farm operation: Grows multiple types of fruits, vegetables and nursery stock on 50 acres, often selling directly to the public

Credentials: President, Oregon Farm Bureau; vice president of the American Farm Bureau Federation; member of the USDA Advisory Committee on Biotechnology & 21st Century Agriculture and the Executive Committee of the United States Biotech Crop Alliance

Quote: "Oregon is a very diverse state that has vast experience with the issues facing American agriculture," Bushue said, referring to the state's unique familiarity with various controversies.

Source: Capital Press Research



Zippy Duvall

Hometown: Greshamville, Ga.

Age: 59

Education: Attended the University of Georgia

Family: Wife, Bonnie, four children and three grandchildren

Farm operation: Raises a 300-head beef cow herd, 750,000 broilers a year and grows hay

Credentials: President, Georgia Farm Bureau; member of the American Farm Bureau Federation's board of directors; served on the Georgia Governor's Agricultural Advisory Committee and the Essential Economy Council; member of the Farmers Bank board of directors

Quote: "They've laid the road map for you, you've just got to make sure you pave the road," Duvall said of executing farm policies decided by state and county Farm Bureaus.



Kevin Rogers

Hometown: Mesa, Ariz.

Age: 55

Education: Attended the University of Arizona

Family: Wife, Janel, and three children

Farm operation: Along with extended family, grows cotton, alfalfa, wheat, barley and corn on 7,000 acres

Credentials: President, Arizona Farm Bureau; member of American Farm Bureau Federation's board of directors; serves on boards and committees for the USDA Air Quality Task Force, Farm Bureau Bank, National Cotton Council, USDA Cotton Board, Farm Bureau Property & Casualty and Western Agricultural Insurance Companies

Quote: (Regarding Farm Bureau advocacy for agricultural issues) "We need to help them be as engaged as they possibly can be."



Don Villwock

Hometown: Edwardsport, Ind.

Age: 64

Education: Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Economics from Purdue University

Family: Wife, Joyce, two children and one grandchild

Farm operation: Grows 4,000 acres of corn and soybeans, including identity preserved varieties for food and seed

Credentials: President, Indiana Farm Bureau; member of the American Farm Bureau Federation's board of directors; vice chairman, Farm Bureau Bank; vice chairman, American Agricultural Insurance Co.; chairman, Farm Foundation think tank; member, Presidential Commission on 21st Century Production Agriculture

Quote: "I'm ready to take the offense. Agriculture has been put back on its heels. We've been more reactive than proactive."

Mateusz Perkowski and Alan Kenaga/Capital Press



American Farm Bureau Federation

Founded: 1919

Mission: "AFBF is the unified national voice of agriculture, working through our grassroots organizations to enhance and strengthen the lives of rural Americans and to build strong, prosperous agricultural communities."

Total membership: 6 million

President's total compensation*: \$842,453

Employee salaries and benefits*: \$14.35 million

Organizational status: Tax exempt as 501(c)(5) agricultural organization

Total revenue*: \$25.5 million

Revenue source: Primarily membership dues, some investment income

Grant spending*: \$340,000

Total assets*: \$68.8 million

Total debt*: \$13.9 million

*Financial information from 2012, the most recent year for which tax data is available. Source: American Farm Bureau Federation

Capital Press graphic

tive-leaning states.

In Bushue's view, this experience has prepared him for the battles facing the AFBF president in coming years.

As the national Farm Bureau's vice president, he also oversees the process for setting the organization's policies, which are based on recommendations from state and county Farm Bureaus.

"I'm a real policy wonk," Bushue said.

Rogers, meanwhile, is a cotton grower who serves on the National Cotton Council and USDA Cotton Board — positions that have made him well-versed in the issues facing many farmers in the Southern region, where the crop is most common.

"It gives me a tie to some of those folks. It gives us some commonality," he said, noting that he's also built relationships in the Midwest due to affiliations with insurance programs in that region.

"Obviously, it doesn't guarantee anything, but it's one man, one vote," Rogers said.

Policy is certainly an important aspect of the AFBF president's job, but the role is entirely about compellingly advocating for AFBF positions, not in deciding what they should be, said Stallman.

The organization's policies are set through a grass-roots process that begins at the county level, he said.

A 'style thing'

Unlike the race for the U.S. presidency, the AFBF



Voting delegates gather at the 2015 American Farm Bureau Federation Annual Convention last January at the San Diego Convention Center. They will elect a new national president at this year's convention in Orlando, Fla.

candidates aren't expected to take a stance on farm policies. They just need to convince people that they'll be persuasive in lobbying for the group's positions.

"It's sort of a style thing. How you present yourself, how you communicate," Stallman said. "The rest of it really is about carrying out orders."

Apart from communication skills, the candidates are being judged by their ability to competently lead a large organization, he said.

When running for office in 2000, Stallman — then the Texas Farm Bureau's president — campaigned largely on a platform of improving the AFBF's finances and management.

The national organization's financial reserves had run low and its internal departments needed to work

better together, he said.

State Farm Bureau organizations are generally bigger in the South and Midwest, which may account for why delegates have traditionally elected candidates from these regions when voting for AFBF president, Stallman said.

Regional advantage

Candidates from large Farm Bureau states are also perceived to be more thoroughly vetted through a "filtering process," since the elections for state president are more competitive, he said.

Both Zippy Duvall of Georgia and Don Villwock of Indiana credit managerial experience as a major asset in the race.

Overseeing the Indiana Farm Bureau's sizable budget and staff is a full-time job for Villwock, who is also

president and chairman of the state Farm Bureau's insurance company and serves as vice chairman of the Farm Bureau Bank and the American Agricultural Insurance Co.

"Experience is always important," Villwock said. "American Farm Bureau is a big business."

Duvall, meanwhile, prides himself on the "business turnaround" he's led at the Georgia Farm Bureau.

Through technology upgrades and improvements in member services, the state Farm Bureau was able to make its insurance program and other products more competitive, he said.

"We were able to stop our membership loss and now we have growth in our membership," said Duvall.

All four candidates have been making their case while

traveling around the country in the months before the vote, which will take place Jan. 10-13 during the AFBF's annual convention in Orlando, Fla.

Delegates for the election aren't chosen until late in the year at the state level, so the candidates are focusing on face-to-face meetings with state Farm Bureau presidents, who generally have a great deal of influence in the race.

One person poised to have an outsized impact on the election is Larry Wooten, president of the North Carolina Farm Bureau, one of the state organizations with the most delegates.

In 2015, for example, North Carolina alone had 27 delegates, compared to 32 delegates for all 13 states in the Western region.

Wooten said he will inform his state delegates about which candidate he prefers and why, but the final decision is ultimately up to them.

In contrast to the national presidential race, however, influential Farm Bureau leaders do not make their endorsements public or campaign for certain candidates, he said.

"It's not something you'd issue a press release about," Wooten said.

Running for AFBF's presidency differs in another significant way: The candidates aren't gauged by how effectively they attack each other, and disparaging fellow contenders is seen as damaging to an individual's own chances of winning.

"I'd be very disappointed in any candidate who would do that," Wooten said. "We've got enough of that going on in national politics."

Ruling stems from class-action lawsuit brought by berry pickers

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could have earned if they had kept working. Workers must receive one rest period every four hours.

The ruling stemmed from a class-action lawsuit brought by berry pickers at Sakuma Brothers Farms in Skagit County. The farmworkers argued that pickers were entitled to paid rest breaks, which are offered hourly wage earners in other industries. The company argued piece-rates compensated workers for rest breaks, an argument the court unanimously rejected.

According to L&I, employ-

ers must compute a worker's hourly pay by dividing the piece-rate earnings by hours worked in one week.

The employer must then multiply the hourly wage by time spent on breaks and add the amount to paychecks.

Piece-rate workers must be paid at least the state's minimum wage of \$9.47 an hour.

A three-page statement by L&I includes hypothetical worksheets to show producers how to calculate pay.

"It's going to be complicated," said Rick Clyne, a Washington Farm Bureau safety director. "It creates two sets of calculations for every individ-

"When the court creates a new law as they have done here, it would not be fair to make it retroactive."

Dan Fazio, Washington Farm Labor Association executive director

ual piece-rate worker."

Fazio called L&I's guidance "first rate" but incomplete.

Unknown is whether the rule exposes growers to back wage claims. The Supreme Court said it wouldn't rule on that issue because Sakuma's workers were asking for paid rest breaks in the future, not to correct the past. The workers and the farm already had reached an out-of-court settle-

ment on back pay. "We take no position on the retroactivity of this rule," the unanimous court wrote.

"When the court creates a new law as they have done here, it would not be fair to make it retroactive," Fazio said. "Unfortunately, no one knows whether this newly created regulation is retroactive."

Workers can file back pay claims with L&I, or go directly to court. L&I spokesman Tim

Church said the agency has not made any decisions on whether it will apply the court's ruling to back pay claims.

In calculating pay, L&I's instructions assume all workers take a 10-minute rest period every four hours. Clyne suggested employers schedule rest periods, rather than leave break times to individual workers.

"It should be a definite time," he said. "It will create logistical problems in a field where we don't have conveyor belts to shut off."

Said Fazio: "The court is apparently requiring employers to schedule rest breaks and to prove that workers actually

take the breaks."

L&I says it has fielded questions about whether other occupations and compensation systems will be affected by the ruling. Church said the department has not issued any guidance in response to those questions.

Fazio said the labor association will ask L&I to flesh out the policy.

"If agriculture employers need to pay separate and different rest break pay, then what about truck drivers who are paid by the mile or the Nordstrom shoe salesperson who is paid a commission?" he asked.

Ryan: It's possible to get smaller immigration-related policy passed

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for him. With most House conservatives wary of anything that could constitute "amnesty" for the 11.5 million immigrants living here illegally, Ryan has offered repeated assurances, before

and after becoming speaker last week, that he will not pursue comprehensive immigration legislation as long as Obama is president.

In several interviews aired Nov. 1, Ryan said it's possible to get smaller im-

migration-related policy passed.

"If we believe and have consensus on things like border enforcement and interior security, then fine," he said on ABC's "This Week."

Obama issued directives

a year ago that gave temporary relief from deportation to about 4 million immigrants in the country illegally, along with permits authorizing them to work in the U.S.

Asked Sunday on NBC's

"Meet the Press" about his previous support for a "path to citizenship," Ryan emphasized something different, saying: "Well, legal status is what I was talking about."

Legal status versus citizenship is an important dis-

inction, partly because only citizenship confers the right to vote. His office said Ryan supports "earned legal status," noting that this could eventually lead to citizenship through existing channels.