



A DIFFERENT KIND OF FARM ORGANIZATION

National Farmers Union meets to debate how it agrees, differs with Trump policies, style

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

BELLEVUE, Wash. — Farmers at the 117th anniversary convention of the National Farmers Union this week had the same worry as the ones who attended the organization's first gathering more than a century ago — low incomes.

The 460 conventioners saw graphs projected on large screens. Upward lines showed yields. Downward lines tracked prices. The lines should lead to a national policy to manage supply, Michael Stumo, head of the Coalition for a Prosperous America, told the convention.

"The laissez-faire, free-trade approach just burned up our countryside," he said.

The Farmers Union, smaller but older than the American Farm Bureau Federation, held its three-day convention, Sunday through Tuesday, at a Hyatt Regency hotel in a Seattle suburb. The organization has a national reach, including a Northwest chapter, but most members are from the Upper Great Plains.

The union took off in the early 1900s, driven by the idea that farmers should organize, control supply and set prices. That's what farmers should do now, Minnesota corn and soybean farmer Ted Winter said. "We need to re-create the value of the Farmers Union."



National Farmers Union President Roger Johnson

Trade concerns

The convention's first day featured a panel on trade that included Stumo, whose organization says it includes liberals and conservatives. Stumo, whose background is in law, mocks economists' rock-ribbed allegiance to free trade, which he says is a myth anyway.

"Free-trade doesn't exist. It's a pink unicorn. People have never seen it, but people like to talk a lot about it," he said.

Stumo acknowledged "ideological hurdles" in advancing a policy based on less agricultural production, plus price supports. "I don't expect to be hoisted up and cheered," he said.


"We think we are in a world of scarcity, where everyone is dying to buy U.S. stuff," he said. "We're in a world of glut. We need a policy that's based on glut, not on scarcity."

Stumo agreed times are tough for farmers, but attributed that to a strong U.S. dollar and overproduction that predates retaliatory tariffs imposed on U.S. farm goods.

In 2011, net farm income was \$113.6 billion, according to USDA. For 2018, the USDA projects \$66.3 billion, a 42% decrease in seven years.

Last month, USDA projected net farm income will increase to

See Union, Page 11

National Farmers Union

- Founded 1902 in Texas as the Farmers Educational and Cooperative Union of America.
- Early accounts credited Newt Gresham as the founder. Following his death in 1906, the union awarded Gresham's wife a \$1,000-a-year pension.
- Chapters established in Oregon and Washington in 1907.
- The union claimed membership of 2 to 3 million before World War I.
- NFU now says it represents about 181,000 family farmers in 33 states. Idaho, Oregon and Washington form the Northwest chapter.
- Roger Johnson has been the national president since 2009. Before that, he was the elected North Dakota agriculture commissioner.
- NFU's educational programs include the Beginning Farmer Institute.

Source: Capital Press research Capital Press graphic

Don Jenkins/Capital Press
Michael Stumo, head of the Coalition for a Prosperous America, speaks at the National Farmers Union convention March 3 in Bellevue, Wash.

Feds propose lifting wolf protections

Species has ignited tensions between ranchers, environmentalists

By GEORGE PLAVERN
Capital Press

A proposal to lift endangered species protections for gray wolves across the Lower 48 states is inflaming old tensions between Northwest ranchers and wildlife advocates.

On March 6, Acting Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt announced the

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will soon come up with a plan for delisting wolves, returning management to states and tribes.

"Recovery of the gray wolf under the Endangered Species Act is one of our nation's great conservation successes, with the wolf joining other cherished species, such as the bald eagle, that have been brought back from

the brink with the help of the ESA," said Fish and Wildlife spokesman Gavin Shire.

Jerome Rosa, executive director of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, said the announcement confirms that wolf recovery is on track, and gives ranchers in Western Oregon more ability to address conflicts between wolves and livestock.

"Hopefully this will add

more tools for our ranchers in the rest of the state to control this species that is really growing at a successful rate," Rosa said.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife removed wolves from the state Endangered Species List in 2015, allowing for wildlife managers in Eastern Oregon to kill wolves that repeatedly attack livestock under certain circumstances, as defined in the state Wolf

Conservation and Management Plan.

Wolves remain federally protected, however, west of highways 395, 78 and 95, limiting ranchers to non-lethal forms of deterrence such as range riders and fladry — lines of rope mounted along fence lines with colored flags that flap in the wind, intended to scare wolves from pastures.

Veril Nelson, a south-

west Oregon rancher, serves as co-chairman of the cattlemen's association wolf committee. He said local producers need the ability to kill problem wolves that repeatedly prey on cows, citing the Rogue pack near Crater Lake that has notched multiple confirmed attacks on livestock over the past year in Jackson and Klamath counties.

See Wolf, Page 11

Washington Senate Democrats advance 'environmental justice' bill

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — Senate Democrats are advancing a bill directing state agencies to base their rules, enforcement actions and funding decisions on "environmental justice."

Several farm groups are on record as opposing the measure, introduced by Sen. Rebecca Saldana, D-Seattle. Known as the Healthy Environment for All Act, the law would ensure people most threatened by environmental damage are heard, she said.

"The HEAL Act is not designed to impact the agricultural industry," Saldana said in an email Wednesday.

Many of the most impacted communities in our state are in rural agricultural communities and thus the HEAL Act could help target more public priorities and investments and better outreach of those rural communities."

Senate Bill 5489 passed the Democratic-controlled environmental and budget committees and was placed



Washington State Sen. Rebecca Saldana

Tuesday on a list of bills in position to be voted by the full Senate.

The bill enjoys broad support from environmental groups and some state agencies, including Ecology and the Department of Natural Resources.

"Supporting environmental justice, equity and inclusion are high priorities for Commissioner (Hilary) Franz and the department," DNR Senior Strategic Adviser Tom Bugert said.

"We want to do what we can to help the bill's passage."

The bill declares that it's the state's policy "to stimulate the health and welfare of human beings" and for all Washington residents to have "aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings."

The bill would create a task force co-chaired by the chairman the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities and someone "well-informed on the principles of environmental justice."

The bill defines "environmental justice" as "the fair treatment and meaning-

ful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies."

The task force would conduct a "cumulative impact analysis" to identify "highly impacted communities and vulnerable populations."

State agencies must use the cumulative impact analysis and adopt a "precautionary approach" to regulations, according to the bill.

See Bill, Page 11

