

2021-22 Nebraska Farmers Union Convention Special Order of Business on Ag Market Reforms

Whereas, the agricultural markets that farmers and ranchers buy their inputs from and the grain and meat markets they sell their products into have become increasingly concentrated and non-competitive over the last 100 years; and

Whereas, agricultural markets no longer function to provide true price discovery or appropriately allocate value because the markets themselves are no longer accessible, transparent, competitive, or fair; and

Whereas, the federal regulatory agencies responsible for protecting the public interest including the anti-trust division of the U.S. Justice Department nor the Packers and Stockyards Division of the USDA (GIPSA) Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration have failed in their regulatory and oversight responsibilities to insure competition in agricultural markets;

Therefore be it Resolved that Nebraska Farmers Union supports the National Farmers Union's "Fairness for Farmers" campaign to shine the light on the deplorable and inequitable situation facing American agricultural producers of all sizes and kinds; and

Therefore be it Further Resolved that Nebraska Farmers Union supports and welcomes President Joe Biden's historic Executive Order on Competition in order to use his additional leverage to bring more competition to our national economy in all areas; and

Therefore be it Further Resolved that Nebraska Farmers Union supports all Congressional efforts that address ag market reform issues including the Senators Grassley, Tester, Fischer, and Wyden's "Cattle Price Discovery and Transparency Act" because it provides:

- Greater fairness to cattle markets, shedding light on a market that is often opaque.
- Mandatory minimums for cash and negotiated grid trading, based on an 18-month rolling average, in each cattle marketing region.
- More transparency by requiring reporting of cattle weights and slaughter deliveries two weeks in advance.
- A publicly-available cattle contract library.
- Sets severe penalties for violations by packers.
- Requires livestock mandatory reporting data be made consistently available.

Therefore be it Further Resolved that Nebraska Farmers Union supports the return of Mandatory Country of Origin Labeling for all U.S. produced meats and dairy products; and

Therefore be it Further Resolved that Nebraska Farmers Union supports Sen. Booker's "Protecting America's Meatpacking Workers Act of 202" and its ag market reforms; and

Therefore be it Further Resolved that Nebraska Farmers Union supports any and all ag market reforms that are substantial, and asks all members of Congress and the agricultural community to work together to begin the long process of putting competition back into our agricultural markets.

2021-22 Nebraska Farmers Union Convention
Special Order of Business on the Passage of the Federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill
Broadband Expansion Section

Whereas, the Nebraska legislature passed the Broadband Bridge Program (LB388) in 2021 which dedicates \$20 million annually to facilitate and fund the development of broadband networks in unserved and underserved areas of Nebraska; and

Whereas, LB388 sets a standard of 100 Mbs download and 100 Mbs upload for new projects funded through this program while setting the definition of underserved areas as 100 Mbs and 20 Mbs upload; and

Whereas, the federal government has allocated millions of dollars to states to improve infrastructure which includes broadband upgrades; and

Whereas, for decades Nebraska Farmers Union has been asking state and federal governments to work together to develop a future facing, affordable, dependable, accessible, high speed internet broadband system for all Americans including those that live and work on their farms, ranches and rural communities so they can fully utilize the benefits of such a system for all their educational, business, farm equipment, employment, and social needs;

Therefore be it resolved Nebraska Farmers Union urges Governor Pete Ricketts and the Nebraska Legislature to take full advantage of this historic opportunity thanks to the additional federal monies that are now available to continue their focus on improving broadband access and quality throughout all parts of Nebraska; and

Therefore be it resolved Nebraska Farmers Union implores Governor Pete Ricketts and the Nebraska Legislature to extend the Broadband Bridge Act beyond 2022-2023 to maximize the new additional federal monies to speed up the deployment of a future facing, affordable, dependable, accessible, high speed internet broadband system for all rural Nebraskans.

2021-22 Nebraska Farmers Union Convention
Special Order of Business on the Passage of the Federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill
Transportation Section

Whereas Congress and President Joe Biden have successfully passed and signed a long overdue Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill, and Nebraska will receive billions of dollars in federal monies for infrastructure needs; and

Whereas the recently passed Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill is the largest federal investment to update our nation's infrastructure since the 1950's under the leadership of President Dwight D. Eisenhower and is a once in a lifetime opportunity to upgrade our nation's deteriorating and outdated infrastructure,

Therefore, Be it Resolved that Nebraska Farmers Union thanks President Joe Biden and those members of Congress that voted for this historic bipartisan infrastructure bill including U.S. Senator Deb Fischer and Congressman Don Bacon for their vision, leadership, and willingness to compromise and work together for the good of the nation; and

Therefore, Be it Further Resolved that Nebraska Farmers Union supports prioritizing the \$2.5 billion allocation Nebraska will receive for roads and bridges to complete the long-delayed Heartland Expressway project and the Nebraska expressway system that was launched and promised to Nebraskans more than three decades ago in 1988 to connect every community larger than 15,000 people with the interstate highway system, and replace outdated and unsafe county and state highway bridges.

2021-22 Nebraska Farmers Union Convention

Special Order of Business on Property Tax Relief

Whereas, production agriculture is a capital and property intensive, high risk, low margin business with wild swings in net income that is for the most part incapable of setting the price of the commodities it produces or pass along its incurred costs of production; and

Whereas, for seven out of the last ten years, grain prices have struggled to cover all the increased costs of production for many farmers and ranchers, creating the loss of both cash and equity; and

Whereas, the current Farm Bill's income safety net does not adequately support family farmers when commodity prices drop below the cost of production, which makes it difficult to keep farmers and ranchers in business, and even more difficult for beginning farmers to start farming operations; and

Whereas, the Legislature has not consistently fully funded the state aid to education formula known as the TEEOSA (Nebraska Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Support Act) based on what the formula itself called for in funding without adjusting the formula downward, resulting in a corresponding shift from state income and sales taxes to local property taxes; and

Whereas, currently 157 out of 244 of Nebraska's school districts or 64% do not currently receive state aid equalization aid from the state for 95% of their school operating budgets, and are forced to rely on property taxes to fund their mostly rural and mostly smaller schools; and

Whereas, less than 10% of the total TEEOSA support goes to Class B schools of below 2,000 students including Class C, and Class D schools, clearly indicating a funding inequity; and

Whereas, Nebraska is 49th lowest in the nation in the percentage (32.3%) of income and sales taxes used for total educational funding compared to 51% nationally; and

Whereas, the national average for the use of property taxes to fund education is 34.2%, and Nebraska's percentage of property taxes used to fund K-12 schools is 49.4%, putting Nebraska agriculture at a huge competitive disadvantage; and

Whereas, of the three primary sources of state tax revenue which includes income, sales, and property taxes, property taxes are by far the most regressive form of taxation because it least reflects the ability of the taxpayer to pay based on their net earned income; and

Whereas, Nebraska Farmers Union policy supports a balanced state tax policy with equal parts of revenue coming from income, sales, and property taxes; and

Whereas, Nebraska Farmers Union policy supports more use of income taxes as the tax that is the most fair and that best reflects the ability of taxpayers to pay, and also supports using more income taxes to fund K-12 education and less reliance on property taxes; and

Whereas, Governor Ricketts and others continues to support income tax reductions that undermines legislative efforts to provide real property tax relief and more fairly fund K-12 education and also oppose any proposed structural fixes to the long standing structural problem of Nebraska's over use of property taxes to fund K-12 education;

Therefore Be It Resolved Nebraska Farmers Union strongly urges rural and urban State Senators to work together and move forward with real and immediate structural reforms that uses more income and sales taxes and reduces property taxes; and

Therefore Be It Further Resolved that Nebraska Farmers Union strongly urges Nebraska land and property owners to get and stay engaged in all aspects of the legislative process to help take advantage of the opportunity for a structural solution to a structural state aid to education funding problem that provides meaningful property tax relief.

2021 Nebraska Farmers Union State Convention Special Order of Business on Net Metering

Whereas, Nebraska Farmers Union worked for over a dozen years to get the Nebraska Legislature to authorize net metering with the passage of LB436 in 2009; and

Whereas, it was widely understood with the passage of LB436 that it would be necessary to monitor and evaluate its implementation and utilization for potential adjustments; and

Whereas, the number of net metering installations in the 12 years since the passage of LB436, according to the data from the Nebraska Power Review Board Net Metering report, is 1,079 systems installed since 2010 as of December 1, 2021, with 507 or 46% of the state totals within the OPPD (184), LES (150), and NPPD (173) systems. The majority of the rural power districts have very few installations despite the high level of interest in both wind and solar energy in rural Nebraska by farm, ranch, and rural businesses; and

Whereas, there is tremendous economic development interest in solar energy development by Nebraska farmers and rural businesses, there is a growing need to update and modernize LB436 passed in 2009; and

Whereas, many mid to large sized businesses, farms and ranchers have electrical power needs in excess of the current 25 kw maximum guaranteed access level for net-metering; and

Whereas, OPPD has authorized net metering installations in their service area up to 100 kw; and

Whereas, Nebraska's publicly owned power system should be at least as user friendly to the owners of their system as private sector utilities are with their customers in other states when it comes to allowing and encouraging more small wind, solar, biomass, hydropower, or geothermal renewable energy installations; and

Whereas, it is in the interests of all Nebraskans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase the use of renewable energy sources including small wind, solar, biomass, hydropower, or geothermal; and

Whereas, many farmers have multiple meters on their farms as they serve their farm's irrigation, grain drying, livestock barns, farm house, and shops electrical needs; and

Whereas, it was the understood intent that when LB436 was passed that the 25kw limit should be measured in a consistent manner using AC current as that is the current used by state electric utilities;

Therefore be it resolved the members of the Nebraska Farmers Union support an increase of the maximum guaranteed access level for net-metering to 100 kw ensuring a one to one offset of energy used for a full 100 kw's; and

Therefore be it further resolved the members of the Nebraska Farmers Union supports changing and updating current state law to allow single owners the option of aggregating their multiple meters for the purpose of net metering; and

Therefore be it further resolved the members of the Nebraska Farmers Union supports increasing the 1 percent to 10 percent of the per public power district cap of the capacity necessary to meet the local distribution utility's average aggregate customer monthly peak demand forecast for that calendar year.

Therefore be it further resolved that all public power utilities for the purposes of complying with the provisions of our state net metering law use AC current as it measured when it integrates with the grid.

2021-2022 Nebraska Farmers Union Convention

Special Order of Business on Hemp in Nebraska

Whereas, the federal 2018 Farm Bill provision known as the Hemp Farming Act of 2018 removed industrial hemp containing less than 0.3% THC from the federal schedule I controlled substances list and transformed hemp into an ordinary agricultural commodity; and

Whereas, Nebraska's soil and annual rainfall in many rural areas of the state are nearly optimal for the growing of hemp, which could provide farmers with an additional and profitable cash crop diversifying and expanding farm operations; and

Whereas, in 2019 the Nebraska legislature passed the Nebraska Hemp Farming Act to align state and federal law, expand the Nebraska hemp industry to the maximum extent lawful, and return the state to the forefront of the hemp industry; and

Whereas, despite the boom in the sales of CBD and other hemp products, Nebraska farmers have found it excessively costly and risky to cultivate and market hemp under the existing Nebraska restrictions; and

Whereas, hemp processing operations have not evolved sufficiently to encourage the economically beneficial cultivation of hemp as a crop in Nebraska;

Therefore, Be it Resolved that Nebraska Farmers Union strongly urges the Nebraska Department of Agriculture to support and implement the Nebraska Hemp Act as intended and remove restrictions that are no longer required by the USDA Final Rule which would permit more Nebraska farmers to diversify their operations; and

Therefore, Be it Further Resolved that Nebraska Farmers Union supports revisions in the Nebraska Hemp Farming Act which will ensure timely availability and duration of licenses without unnecessary costs, restrictions, or risks to the grower, processor, handler, transporter, or marketer; and

Therefore, Be it Further Resolved that Nebraska Farmers Union strongly urges the Nebraska Legislature to support a substantial allocation of federal infrastructure and/or state funds to the Nebraska Department of Economic Development for grants to increase and expand hemp processing. The upside economic potential for hemp production in Nebraska will not be realized until our state gets serious about establishing processing capacity.