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NeFU Urges Congress to Pass Updated and Improved Farm Bill

LINCOLN, NE – Ten Nebraska Farmers Union (NeFU) members were part of nearly 250 National Farmers Union (NFU) Fall Fly-In farmers, ranchers, and other participants that walked the halls of Congress September 14-16. The annual NFU Fall Fly-In focused on the need for Congress to pass an improved and updated Farm Bill, and to not dismantle USDA.

The outdated 2018 Farm Bill that relied on 2014 data has had its expiration date been extended three times. The delegation was divided into two teams for non-Nebraska Congressional meetings. Each team added three visits on their schedules. The delegation met with all five members of the Nebraska Congressional Delegation or their staff. In addition, NeFU Member Willie Cade participated in a White House briefing and a listening session with the National Economic Council and the Office of Legislative Affairs to discuss the farm economy and the Farm Bill.

NeFU President John Hansen, who led the delegation, said “Our participants shared their concerns about the financial squeeze they were feeling: ever higher ag input costs, diesel prices, hurtful beef imports, interest costs, inflation, as well as low ag commodity prices, lost export markets, and ag credit concerns.

On the Farm Bill, participants stressed the need for mandatory country of origin labelling (MCOOL), expanded year-round E15, more conservation funding, and a better farm income safety net. They also explained why HR1 cuts to SNAP hurts rural residents and future Farm Bills, and why dismantling USDA would be a disaster for both food consumers and producers, and the need for more emphasis on anti-trust enforcement and efforts to restore and build local food programs and markets including processing.

Attending this year’s Fly-In were Becky Potmesil of Alliance, Bill Armbrust of Elkhorn, Dan and Amber Conway of Red Cloud, Keith Dittrich of Tilden, Don Schuller of Wymore, Willie Cade of Chicago, and Matt Gregory, Kevin Herrold and John Hansen of Lincoln. Dan and Amber Conway and Kevin Herrold are with FUMA (Farmers Union Midwest Agency). Willie Cade is a member who also serves as a right to repair and ag data consultant for Nebraska and several other Farmers Union state organizations. For five of the ten participants, this was their first trip to Washington, D.C.

The Fly-In participants heard from NFU and USDA officials Monday morning at USDA’s Jefferson auditorium as well as from FTC Commissioner Mark Meador. Monday afternoon at a Capitol Hill Briefing at the Dirksen Senate Office Building, Fly-In participants heard from former FTC Commissioner Alvaro Bedoya, Director of Rethink Trade Lori Wallach, Rep. Shontel Brown (D-OH) and Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN). There was also a panel that discussed trade, mergers, and health care.

“Our NeFU delegation this year reflected the diversity of our state’s agriculture. Members produced corn, soybeans, cattle, hay and horses. They were current, retired, conventional, organic, and specialty crop producers, and crop insurance agents. Regardless of what they grow and how they do it, they all know how badly our state needs Congress to pass an improved and updated Farm Bill,” Hansen concluded.