

SCRIBE NOTES
OALP Class 15, Seminar 6
Pennsylvania and Washington D.C.
March 5-11, 2011

Saturday, March 5, 2011

Amy Brown

On Saturday, March 5th, we all convened at the Will Rogers International Airport in Oklahoma City, OK. We were all excited since it had been almost three months since we had been together, and we were all anxious to embark on our newest adventure together. Our spirits were dampened, however, when we learned that Rhonda had torn her Achilles the night before and would not be able to join us on the trip.

In OALP Class XV fashion, we quickly gained some attention as we spread out with our luggage open to pack Oklahoma-shaped packages of barbeque sauce donned in trash bags within our suitcases.....then we began group check-in.

Because we were going to be gone for an entire week, we had to pack for all types of weather. Unfortunately, a few of us forgot about the weight limit on luggage, which we found out was \$100 fine regardless if you were 1 pound or 15 pounds over the 50 pound weight limit! As four of us prepared to shell out \$100 each, we decided it would be a smarter decision to purchase an additional bag at the oh-so-handy kiosk located conveniently next to check-in. Therefore, Alisa, Shannon, Blayne, and I rapidly repacked into the 'community' bag until each of our bags fell under 50 pounds!

After we made it through security, we were all introduced to Wheezy, our new class mascot who travelled with us throughout the week!

The flight from OKC to Chicago was on-time and some members of the group were very excited to find sushi in the airport while others made work of some Chicago-style hot dogs.

Once in D.C, everyone's luggage had survived the BBQ sauce but had been inspected by TSA. We had not thought about how the shape of OK would look on an X-Ray machine!

We found our bus and met the bus driver of all time-Andre! We enjoyed the scenery as we travelled to Pennsylvania, stopped for dinner, and then on to Gettysburg. We knew we were in for a cultural treat when in the lobby of the hotel, in walks a Confederate soldier that enjoyed pictures with Danielle. After checking into our rooms, the group had some different experiences.

First, most of us were ready for a beverage and began looking for the hotel tavern. After deciding it was behind an old wooden door, we walked down a long hallway and into the first underground bar we had ever experienced! As the night progressed, we experienced Betty, the bartender, a member of the Hell's Angels, a Union soldier, and a Confederate soldier. And although we may never prove it, we are certain Alexander Hamilton was sitting at the bar.

Others experienced a bus ride with Andre and then crossed the street to sit around the fire with Union and Confederate soldiers!

Once all were ready for bed, we were fortunate to have our fearless leader, Edmond the Entomologist. Most of us experienced a bug infestation in our rooms, but were assured that the stink bugs were fairly harmless, so after a bug-killing spree, we called it a day!

Sunday - March 6th, 2011

Monty Thornbrough

10:00 a.m. Gettysburg Battlefield Tour – guide: Mr. John Fuss

Weather – Raining / Temperature – 60

Tour began from our hotel: Quality Inn Gettysburg Motor Lodge. The tour lasted two hours, more or less. We made three stops throughout the tour. 1st Stop: was at the Eternal Light Peace Memorial at Oak Hill, 2nd Stop: North Carolina Memorial at Seminary Hill, and the 3rd Stop: Little Round top.

12:00 p.m. Lunch at General Pickett's Restaurant in Gettysburg, PA

1:00 p.m. We made our way to Lebanon, PA

3:00 p.m. Lebanon, PA - Met with Stan Bucher and went with our host families for the evening.

Monday March 7, 2011

Kyle Dorton

Founders Hall/Milton Hershey School

The tour guide for Founders Hall was Harry Heath. Harry is a former student of the Milton Hershey School. Our tour of Founders Hall was very informative. Mr. Heath informed the group of Milton Hershey's vision for Founders Hall and the Hershey School.

Founders Hall has the second largest free-standing rotunda in the world. The hall was built in honor of the Hershey family. The rotunda showcases all 50 U.S. Flags which represent each state that is represented by a student at the Hershey School. Today about 50% of the students are from the state of PA. Founders Hall is used for many functions including ceremonies, weddings, graduations, dances, and church services for the students. Former Governors of PA have used it for their Governor's Ball in the past years.

Following the tour of Founders Hall we watched a brief video about the Hershey School and learned about their educational mission for children all over the U.S. Every student must take vocational as well as academic courses. The school is non-denominational but the students are required to practice religion and attend church services once a week.

We learned that the students live with host parents in homes located on the grounds of the school. They learn how to do basic everyday activities such as cooking, cleaning, etc.

Milton Hershey started the school in 1909 for orphan children. This was due to his and his wife's love for children. They could not have children of their own. In 1918, he donated his entire fortune to the Hershey School to provide for its financial needs in the future. Today, they have served well over 8,000 students. Food, clothing, housing and medical expenses are all provided free to the students of the school.

Hershey Chocolate Factory Tour:

The Hershey Chocolate factory has over 350 million pounds of chocolate produced each year. At the end of March 2011, they are relocating to a different plant in Hershey, PA that is currently under construction. Projections show that in the new plant they will be able to produce 600 million pounds of chocolate per year in the new factory. Currently, the plant produces 36 million Hershey Kisses per day.

Chocolate World:

The visit to Chocolate world was just a little side trip that was entertaining and all related to Hershey Chocolate. It included a candy store and gift shop along with an animated ride showing the process of making chocolate.

Lunch: Hoss's steak house.

- Included a brief visit with Jean Lonie, PA Agriculture Department Director of Communications. Mrs. Lonie talked about PA agriculture and gave a brief overview of some of the issues they are facing.

Amish Farm Visit

- Elam and Sadie King and Family

- We had the opportunity to visit one on one with the King family and learn about their farming operation and the Amish way of life. This visit was more of an on-your-own visit to tour the farm and ask your own questions individually.

Depart for Washington, D.C.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 A.M.

Job Springer

7:45 a.m. the group arrived at 104A USDA/Whitten Building

8:00 a.m. Kathryn Hill greeted the group. Kathryn works in the office of communications. We were taken to the Williamsburg Room. Kathryn told us the table we were sitting around was recently appraised for \$75,000 and was used by President Regan. The other half of the table was located in another room. For the next 30 minutes, she told us about her life and accomplishments. She has sung opera internationally.

9 a.m. Tom Vilsack talked to the group via a prerecorded DVD. He told us that USDA was started in 1862 by then President Abraham Lincoln. It was called "the peoples department." Currently, USDA has 100,000 employees. There are six areas that USDA serves

- Farm and foreign services
- Food safety
- Marketing and regulatory
- Natural resources and the environment
- Research economics and education
- Rural development

9:30 a.m. Jeff Cohan, Deputy Associate Administrator of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), talked to the group. He explained the different nutrition services offered through SNAP. There are 44 million people assisted through programs offered by SNAP with \$64 billion spent in 2010. Thirty percent of participants work. Jeff explained that food and security have a multiplier effect. For every \$5 issued by SNAP, \$9 is generated within the local community. Each state pays half of the administration costs associated with the program. SNAP was started during the Kennedy era. In order to receive benefits, a person must pass an income test, resource test, work requirement, be a citizen, must show pay and/or bank statements, and meet household requirements. Discussion occurred on electronic cards. Not all retailers participate, even though there is no transaction fee for either participants or retailers. There are 40 investigators across the country that investigate fraudulent activity.

10:00 a.m. Harry Baumes, Director of the Office of Energy Policy and New Uses, talked to the group. There is a goal to produce 36 billion gallons of renewable fuels by 2022 with 21 billion gallons coming from advanced energies and 16 billion from cellulosic ethanol. This should result in a reduction of 60% of greenhouse gases compared to 2005. Areas that are being researched as alternative energy sources include woody, perennial grasses, sweet sorghum, sugar cane, and others such as algae.

10:30 a.m. Skip Hyberg, Agricultural Economist for the Farm Service Agency, talked to the group. Skip talked about conservation economic and sustainability issues. There are currently 31.3 million acres in the conservation reserve program (CRP). The number of acres allowed in CRP nationally is capped at 32 million acres. March 15th to April 15th is general signup for new acres into the program. The program keeps the land out of production for 10 years. There is a 50% cost share for establishing native forage. The market price suggested by USDA is based on USDA rental rate analyses.

11:00 a.m. Michael Alston, Deputy Administrator of the Risk Management Agency, spoke to the group. Michael commented that the agency saved \$6 billion during recent renegotiations. Four of the \$6 billion was used to pay off debt. The other \$2 billion was used to provide additional insurance. It was stated that federal crop insurance started in 1938 and included wheat, corn, and soybeans.

12:00 p.m. Lunch was enjoyed in the Secretary's Dining Room

Tuesday March 8, 2011 P.M.

Todd Love

Chairperson was Jessica Wilcox and she started on time after lunch. She introduced our first presenter, who was Miles McEvoy.

Miles is the Deputy Administrator for the National Organic Program. He discussed the National Organic Program, "From the Farm to the Table." Their direction is to uphold and enforce standards while implementing a strategic plan. Once we had an overview of the program, Miles reviewed the accomplishments of this past year and one half. The accomplishments included completing a Quality Manual and a Program Handbook. The future goals include the following:

- Quality Management
- Standards Consistency
- Accreditation Oversight
- Compliance and Enforcement
- Management Strategy

The next Speaker was Ron Trostle, Coordinator of the USDA International Base Line Projections, Economic Research Service. Ron reviewed the prospect for world agriculture and how the baseline was established. He talked about the 10 year baseline and reviewed trends on the meat and commodity pressures. He then went through how they establish the 10-year projection. Finally, he reviewed imports and exports by major commodity groups, with an overview of each major crop and livestock group.

The next speaker was Dr. David Kaplan who is the Assistant Deputy Administrator, USDA-ARS, Emergency and Domestic Program. David covered the Aphis Program by starting out with their mission statement: Protect Natural Resources. He then covered Wildlife Services, Plant Protection and Quarantine, Veterinary Services, and Biotech Services. He then discussed the types of response, both regular and emergency response actions, as examples. There was a review of how regulations were established and why. David then finished his presentation with examples of issues and the challenges presented by both sides of an issue. He highlighted the feral hog issue in Oklahoma.

Our next speaker was William Hohenstein, Director, Climate Change Program in the Office of the Chief Economist. This presentation was a review of why the Office of the Chief Economist was responsible for this office. There was a review of the trends over the last 100 years. Next, we reviewed the changes in land use, greenhouse gases and carbon sinks as the population has grown and the economy has shifted from an agricultural base to an industrial base. The presentation covered the science and goals of the plan by integrating the climate change into daily operation. This was the heaviest PowerPoint of the day, and the group was ready to move on.

We next moved across the mall to the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History where we met Dr. Michael Gates, Research Entomologist with the USDA. Dr. Gates gave us a tour of the Systematic Entomology Lab. He presented what his responsibilities included: Research, Information for Stakeholders, and Identification Services. We went through what a curator is, and the processes, with his focus on wasps. He reviewed the process they use to gather, isolate, identify, and preserve the insect. Finally, we spent some time reviewing the technology that he uses to identify and preserve specimens.

We left the Smithsonian and jumped on the Metro to experience an evening of fine dining with the Missouri Ag Leadership Program. This was an excellent time to visit and get to know folks in another program from another state. The interaction was excellent and the food was good, too.

We headed to the Metro to catch it back to the hotel, where we meet the Illinois group as they were staying in the same hotel as us. It was an excellent end to a great day.

Wednesday March 9, 2011

Blayne Arthur

National Association of Counties

Don Larson- Chair of NACO Ag Rural Steering Committee

Mr. Larson was in D.C. for a legislative conference. He is from east central South Dakota- Brookings. He is the owner of Larson Manufacturing and Electronics. He shared with us that soybeans and processing is a robust agricultural industry in South Dakota. He also shared that Keith Lagenheim, a dairy farmer from Wisconsin, was the previous chair of his committee.

Mr. Larson feels that there is a lack of education regarding local government. He feels we need to place an emphasis on leadership and our youth. He is a big promoter of the 4-H program and feels that young people need to get involved. He said that at the South Dakota state fair, the 4-H technology project had the greatest number of entries. NACO is linking a stronger bond with 4-H to address the current lack of leadership in rural America. He felt NACO needed to work with 4-H to get more involvement in county government. Mr. Larson is a South Dakota Ag and Rural Leadership Program Class I member.

He feels that if you are not at the table, then you are on the menu. He suggests remembering to say "I represent agriculture and rural America." Every dollar of new wealth in agriculture goes back to the soil. He said that he is proud to be from rural America and confident. He pointed us to the Rural Research Policy Institute that provides unbiased statistics. NACO is different because they elect officials from all groups working to develop rural America.

Erik Johnston-Associate Legislative Director- NACO **Jackie Byers- Counties 101**

Shapes and sizes of counties are based on the way we settled America. The 400th anniversary of Jamestown was recently celebrated. People have been living and prospering in the U.S. since the 1600s. When counties were set, people wanted all their property included in the county so it was drawn to where it was not more than one day's horse ride from the county seat in the Northeast. The square counties are 10 square acres offered to soldiers after the Revolutionary and 1812 Wars because the government could not pay them. Texas is irregular because of Mexico and the Alamo. By the time we arrived in the west, we had built the railroads and in the desert the population density is not great. People aggregated where there was water. Lots of federal land is owned in the west as well as railroad hubs. The states draw county lines. In California, gold affected the settlement of counties.

Counties were originally created as administrative districts of each individual state. The county looks to the state for constitutional authority. Dillon's Rule or Law is in 38 states. In 1872, Iowa sued a county saying the county exceeded authority granted by the state. The remaining states do what they want unless the state prohibits. In Arlington, there is a \$3,000 bonus to county heroes to buy homes (e.g. fire fighters, etc.). The county had to get approval from the state legislature to do this. In 1988, Iowa abolished Justice Dillon's Rule even though they established it.

There are four types of government. One form is population divided and someone is elected from each district. They meet in January and elect a chair of the group. The small ones have three people and the large have nine people. The next form is a pie graph but you have an elected chair and the chair has more authority. The officials are part time (Los Angeles Co. is the largest in the U.S. with this form). The third form is either of the first two with a hired county administrator or director. The fourth form is where the county director is an elected position. This form is experiencing rising popularity. The southwest has a hybrid with five district representatives and then two people voted as at-large directors.

Counties have financial authority and they must raise money. A total of 60% of the money spent has to be raised by property tax while 20% is sales tax and 20% is special regulatory fees. Eleven states have given the counties authority to raise income taxes.

Counties are responsible for infrastructure of your life

- First responders (firefighters and EMS)
- Last Resort (public housing and food banks)

3,068 counties in the U.S. (highlighted voting challenges)

WWII move to suburbia - with homes designed by Levitt brothers (people had infrastructure expectations). Prior to the move, people lived in cities. The rise of suburbia equaled the decline of the family farm.

Refer to form provided: "What do County Commissioners Do all Day?"

Jeff stated that NACO was founded in 1935 to work on public land issues - federal lands are not taxable (program called payment in lieu of taxes).

Legislative affairs is NACO's chief purpose:

- Research staff
- Public affairs assistance
- Enterprise service (U.S. communities- contracts) pools buying powers of counties (28 contracts from office supplies to astro-turf)
- Green government initiative to fund best practices initiatives
- Legislative affairs
- Technical assistance

All U.S. counties are members in 2011

Federal /State/Local Government Interactions/Interdependence

- Federal mandates
- Mutual constituents
- Services funded jointly
- Federal T.A.'s consultation
- Restore the partnership - not just another stakeholder
- Big issue is unfunded mandates (water treatment, bridges, higher reflectivity on road signs, land fill regulations)
- NACO is always in opposition to EPA unfunded mandates
-

Lot of grass roots efforts – America County Platform

NACO is currently working on the farm bill and especially the rural development title. They are also working on transportation, aviation, food safety, and rural healthcare.

When funding regulations came out for broadband funding and expansion, the irony was you had to apply online.

Counties are responsible for 44% of the bridges in the United States.

Trudy Rice - Ralph Tabor Fellow - works for land grant system – from Kansas

The fellowship was established between NACO and extension in 1988. There are 21 fellows from 14 states. County Services Department is a stone soup lesson (if you want people to do something, create the impression that you are giving them an opportunity to be a part of your success). Leadership is required at all levels (community, city, county, state, federal, and international). We must work together to make things happen.

Three core competencies: framing ideas, building social capital, and mobilizing resources

Networks - need to bond networks, bridge networks, link networks, and this is how you get things done.

(everyone has a similar issue but a different opinion)

Productive Public Participation-

- Clear goal
- Deliver on promise
- Use appropriate tools
- Manage the process (conflict resolution)

County government takes care of you from birth to death and everything in between (birth certificates, deeds, death certificates)

Success soup-

- Create stock using vision and goals
- Heat until burning with desire achieved
- Add tsp of commitment
- Add honesty and integrity to taste
- Stir with energy and enthusiasm
- Add liberal portions of faith
- Bring to boil with hard work and effort
- Remove from heat and let simmer with patience and perseverance

There is a current consolidation of local government occurring across the nation- consolidation of delivery service.

To be a member of NACO, it costs about \$460 per year for a county to be a member. LA County pays \$60,000 for 10 million people (based on size).

You can email Jeff for a trial membership.

PILT (payment in lieu of taxes) is the entire reason NACO got started- reason counties get the PILT \$ (money is provided instead of property tax for federally owned lands).

Rural broadband is the key to success for rural America.

Shannon Schlecht is the Director of Policy for US Wheat Associates - “The World’s Most Reliable Choice.” Shannon grew up in North Dakota – wheat, cattle, soybeans, corn - and has worked in Cairo Egypt. It is a cooperator program of 18 state wheat production organizations, U.S. Wheat Associates, third-party contributors, and USDA-FAS. The mission is to enhance and promote the exports of U.S.-produced wheat through effective trade policy and market development.

Shannon covered 31 countries out of the Cairo office; it is mainly an overseas organization - 75% of employees are overseas and 57 employees are foreign nationals with 19 folks in Washington, D.C. for a total of 88 employees. They obtain \$4.8 million in contributions in the form of membership dues (\$350,000 is from OK). They secure and expand export markets - 50% of wheat in the U.S. is exported.

USDA-FAS: 1956 Foreign Market Development Funds (FMD); 1986- MAP (Market Access Programs) contracts quality samples program in emerging markets.

USW receives \$2.90 from USDA for each \$1.00 contributed by member states

- FY11- production share of total USW budget is estimated at 26%
- Every dollar invested into export market development yields \$115 to the entire industry
- For every \$1 invested = \$35 increase in exports

Export Market Development – HRW Activities 2010 Crop Quality Report distributed to customers overseas

Export Market Dev- Tech. Servicing

The act of blending grain together results in higher quality, specific end products, lower costs, and more flexibility. Blending with other U.S. wheat classes improves competitor wheat. Conferences and seminars with buyers around the world are always being held.

Q-sum plan applied at export limits variance of protein levels (min/max) makes difference, average is different and sub lots might have different qualifications.

Trade servicing is one of the most important functions.

Export Market Dev - HRW activities - value matrix allows customers to capture cost and quality. The relationship highlights that we are a reliable and dependable supplier.

Nigeria was the #1 customer in 2010 - they had a wheat ban from 1987-1992. Lagos office opened in 2000 and they have built relationships, capacity buildings, product development, significant import growth, and are the largest importer of hard red winter wheat. They have gone from a one million bushel market in 1982 to a 130 million bushel market in 2010. They have an 85% market share.

GASC- Government Authority for Supplies Commodities - group USWA works through in Egypt - Egyptian government buys 70% of wheat and private side buys 30%.

Trade Policy

Colombia Free Trade Agreement – competition from Canada, European Union, and Argentina; free and fair playing field - potential losses of \$100 million per year

What we are doing:

- regular meetings with coalitions and administration to voice the importance of FTA to the industry
- letters to the administration and Congress
- testimony to committees of jurisdiction
- grass roots efforts
- currently being held up on labor and human rights issues

South Korea FTA, Panama FTA, Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement, Mexico Trucking Dispute, and Cuba (hopefully Mexico will be settled by January of 2012). They are currently pushing to open Cuba up to additional exports - Cuba needs credit.

Doha Round - WTO Negotiations - 153 member countries - Have discussed reduced tariffs, increasing market access, eliminating export subsidies, and decreasing domestic support ceilings.

World Wheat- 7-10 years' demand exceeds output of 350 million bushels per year (this is an increase in the past few years for wheat).

There are about 57-63 million tons of wheat in the established crop for the United States for 2011. There is a lot of hard red winter wheat available the challenge is the export capacity to get orders loaded.

Biggest importers of wheat are: Egypt, Brazil, Algeria, Indonesia, Japan, and the European Union.

The world population will be 9.5 billion in 2050 so we need to increase wheat production to 900 million metric tons per year. The population growth will mostly occur in Latin America with 300 million, Africa with one billion, and Asia with 1.8 billion people.

We need to influence trade policy to keep export markets open.

Is there GMO acceptance? Probably 10 years away from acceptance. Currently, six different assessments have been done on biotech.

Kay Johnson Smith- Animal Ag Alliance

This organization is the nation's oldest and largest coalition speaking on behalf of the total animal agriculture industry. They connect stakeholders nationally and internationally. They strive to educate the public and media about the importance of agriculture and protect consumers' choices while also protecting farmers and ranchers' rights to produce the way they do.

Activists - positive image is portrayed to the public. Wayne Pacelle, CEO of HSUS, states "In his ideal world, there would be no pets." His new book is "The Bond."

MFA - Mercy for Animals - they promote Kathy Freston, a spiritual vegan.

PETA - takes in \$17-25M every year.

Farm Sanctuary - CEO is author of a book very committed to the belief that animals are not ours to use.

Non-profit activist groups solicit \$400M annually in tax deductible revenue.

HSUS takes in \$100-130 million per year. Senior Director Paul Shapiro states, "The meat industry equals systematic murder." Just half of one percent of the total HSUS budget is spent in grants to organizations providing hands-on care to dogs and cats. In 2008, they had \$86 million in income. They spent \$20 million on campaigns, legislation, and litigation. They spent \$24 million on fundraising - \$4 million of which went to professional fundraisers and \$30.9 million in salaries and wages.

Review OpEd article from the Washington Examiner by Ron Arnold 12/2/10

<http://washingtonexaminer.com/opinion>

PETA's long term goal is to eliminate animal agriculture.

Iowa is currently working on a bill to protect against activists being employed in agricultural facilities. HSUS sent a letter in opposition to the legislation.

As a national critical infrastructure - agriculture is designated by the Dept. of Homeland Security as such.

Activists are focusing on people of faith with continued pressure on retailers such as Subway, Sonic, Wal-Mart and Albertson's.

KFC is currently a champion because they have pushed back against HSUS and PETA.

Ways to address current issues:

- Implement animal care guidelines
- Highlight policies on animal care and handling
- Have good relationships with local law enforcement
- Find solutions to all animal handling and care problems
- Find solutions to any environmental problems
- Have an animal welfare statement on your website (look at Smithfield Foods and Belstra Farms for examples)
- Take a look at your operation via Google satellite to identify any possible issues

You can request "On Farm Security Recommendations" from Kay.

Become an activist for Agriculture

- Tell your story - ensure your commitment and shared values are known to customers, legislators and regulators, community, media, and local law enforcement

We need Right-to-Farm laws.

Get active in social networking.

www.animalagalliance.org

Farm Credit Lunch

Robbie Boone - lobbyist

Farm Credit is the Trade Association for the Farm Credit System - the Farm Credit Administration is their regulator.

Robbie has been with the Farm Credit Council for two years – Farm Credit is very bi-partisan - there is a great divide currently between the parties. Robbie's job is to educate Congress about the agricultural lending decisions that have to be made at the local level. He serves as the eyes and ears for Farm Credit. Turnover on the hill is constant which makes his job challenging. Email is a primary form of contact for all staff- many members – they even twitter about their activities. Congressmen need lobbyists to provide them information - constituents supply the agenda.

Gary Matteson grew commercially cut flowers in New Hampshire and then was elected director for Farm Credit. He took over in Washington, D.C. in 2007. He supports the Young Beginning Farm Programs – mission is to lend to all of agriculture. The challenge currently is the aging of Farm Credit boards.

When Farm Credit borrows money on Wall Street, there is an implied guarantee from the federal government. There was a \$1.25 billion bailout in the 1980s that they just recently paid back.

New producers need to look for FSA funds.

Last year, Farm Credit loans got up to over \$200 billion (this equals 30% of ag lending).

No one in Washington knows what Farm Credit does.

Young Beginning Small Farmer Program encourages preferential programs based on the local area needs (there may be a lower rate; may need business planning, training and assistance).

Gary suggested that we ask Congressmen to use OALP as a resource by providing fair and unbiased information. We should all have a 45 second elevator speech about why agriculture is important.

The afternoon and evening were free for participants to explore Washington, D.C. on their own.

Thursday March 10, 2011

Danielle Whaley

Dan Boren - Serving Oklahoma's 2nd Congressional District in eastern Oklahoma.

Mr. Boren discussed budget issues. Resources are thin and the government is broke were the main points he wanted to get across. Water issues are a big concern to him, especially in his district. The need for a comprehensive water plan is top on the agenda, as well as the Indians involved in this solution.

Other main points

- Sustainability of agriculture
- EPA issues and dust generation
- Immigration concerns
- Overall regulations

Emily Eden - Aid for Tom Cole – Representing the 4th District in Oklahoma

Tom is serving his fifth term. He is a leader in dealing with Native Americans and tribal governments. He was in two session hearings the morning of our visit regarding bills that will be introduced concerning water rights/issues/funding. Budget cuts are his highest concern at the present time. He is also concerned with animal agriculture issues, GIPSA, as well as the CR getting off the floor, and social security cuts. He is also concerned with the defense and projected military cuts. Emily's job is to serve as his liaison between the constituents and Tom.

Tom Coburn M.D. - US Senator from Oklahoma

Tom's big burning issues seem to be related to the ethanol tax earmark and blender's fees. He has gone after the earmarks from day one. He believes that government should not be involved in much of what they stick their nose in. GIPSA was asked about and he again stated "Why is the government even involved in this issue?" As well as education, these are areas that the government should remove themselves. Let the states run the states. He stated that social security is the biggest expenditure our government has. His views are that 70% of the people on the Hill have not ever lived in the real world and have no idea what they are creating when they come up with some of the bills that are out there.

Frank Lucas - Congressman Representing Oklahoma's 3rd District – Chairman to the Agriculture Committee

We met with Mr. Lucas in the agriculture hearing room to hear some of the issues he is facing. He was meeting with the director of the EPA that afternoon to discuss the dust generation regulations. He is preparing the committee for the next Farm Bill due out in 2012, and has some major obstacles in his way such as young freshman on the committee. The Farm Bill is a combination of 1) no money, and 2) the nature of the committee (young in age and new - 23 new faces that have never gone through a farm bill). He is the first Oklahoman to serve as the committee chairman and his hope is to keep the committee bipartisan within regional issues. The economy needs to pick up. He will be looking at all programs within the Farm Bill, and see what works. He would like to audit the existing bill to see what is working and what is not working. Items such as:

- When it's clear that an administrator is not correctly doing a program - they need to change.
- Where is the scientific basis of the program? To verify that there is a difference being made.
- Cost benefit of the program?
- Cost to the public.
-

He stated that he is very fond of conservation, but change is coming. The demand on food will not be going down and 75% of spending will continue to go toward nutrition. Our challenge is the people who do the work need to be audited. They need to "Clean up the White House." They should not have even come up with stupid rules.

James Inhofe – U.S. Senator for Oklahoma

Luke Holland was our aid to Senator Inhofe, and we had an open discussion on the 2012 Farm Bill, energy stance, spill prevention and control, tax filings, child tax credits, and silly spending such as BLM horses. Watershed concerns were brought to the table and discussed. Foreign trade agreements with Korea and Panama were high on his level of concerns.

The group was split into two groups to take tours of the capital. The tour covered the old parts of courts and the new house meeting rooms. Some of the group even got to witness a bill being passed.

Dinner was held with representatives from Monsanto Company. The group was divided among tables with the personnel that attended from the vice president of government affairs, to regulatory affairs manager, to lobbyists. They showed a short video and then good discussion occurred.

Friday March 11, 2011

Kurtis Sears

The majority of the day was spent en route from Washington, D.C. to Oklahoma City. However, we did have a chance to have a short synthesis meeting regarding our thoughts concerning the week.

The home stays in southern Pennsylvania were mostly good. Some have indicated it would have been good to know a little bit more about their family before they arrived. It would also be important to have stays where the people are very knowledgeable about agriculture in the area.

The Hershey area was excellent. Some questioned what purpose or contribution the Hershey plant added to an Ag leadership program. Others responded that the manufacturing side certainly was provided and the major local input from dairies is milk which is obviously agriculture related.

Some requested improvements were as follows:

- Request driver of charter bus to know some history of the Washington, D.C. area
- Round table discussion with variety of speakers on agriculture subjects
- Spread out congressional visits to have time to visit and prepare
- Break into smaller groups and visit with different congressmen and be able to cover a broader base
- Have a breakfast at the hotel and invite congressmen
- Have a lobbyist or other knowledgeable person go over schematics and other pertinent information in how we should interact with politicians and how to frame our questions for them
- It would be nice to visit with more trade and commodity groups

The main sentiment of the group was very positive. It was a great experience and many opportunities to expand our knowledge and horizons were addressed. The trip certainly brought to light many issues that can be addressed and a new perspective into how our government operates.