

State Farm Bureaus Earn Recognition for Stellar Programs

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size in the nation but were 23rd in membership gain for 2001.

"It was a very exciting time for us," said Administrator Mark Zuzik. "When Maryland was introduced on stage an eruption went up from our delegation and the enthusiasm caught on - all of the delegates from other states then starting cheering."

"Maryland was just popping up all over the place," Mr. Zuzik said. "We received membership awards, the Gold Star honors, our Young Farmers were runners up in the achievement contest, Leona Dell continues to be a leader of the women and our efforts with the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation were recognized."

The administrator said AFBF leaders recognized the strides our organization has made and did not hesitate to congratulate members throughout the convention. "We heard the comment, 'Maryland is really coming on' several times from state and national leaders," Mr. Zuzik reported. "I'm very happy for our members."

Farm Bureaus from Arkansas, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Texas shared top honors for offering stellar programs for Farm Bureau members in 2001. Those nine states each earned plaques decorated with the maximum 12 gold stars in the program categories.

Gold stars were awarded for the categories of membership; commodity marketing; Farm Bureau Women program; Young Farmer and Rancher program; information and public relations; state and local governmental affairs; leadership and organizational development; public policy implementation; special programs; political education; policy development; and Agriculture in the Classroom and agricultural promotion.

Capturing 11 gold stars in the competition was North Carolina Farm Bureau Federation. Six state Farm Bureaus, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Montana, New York and Pennsylvania, each earned 10 gold stars.

Other gold star rankings and state Farm Bureaus recognized for their outstanding program work were:

- Nine: Florida, Louisiana, New Mexico and Washington

- Eight: Arizona, Kansas, Minnesota, Virginia and Wisconsin

- Seven: Maine, Mississippi and Vermont

- Six: California, Georgia, Maryland and South Carolina

- Five: Nebraska
- Four: Connecticut and Oregon
- Three: Delaware, Nevada, Rhode Island, South Dakota and Wyoming
- Two: Alabama
- One: Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Dakota, Puerto Rico and West Virginia.

Analysts Optimistic Farm Bill Will Reach Finish Line

Speakers at a farm bill conference held during the AFBF annual meeting said they expect Congress to produce a new farm law early this year and downplayed differences between the pending Senate bill and the measure passed by the House in October.

AFBF President Bob Stallman emphasized that the organization wants the farm bill completed sooner rather than later. "Your organization is going to work to make that happen," he pledged.

Stallman recounted the process that led to the House passing a bipartisan measure in October and the Senate debating the farm bill up until Christmas - a process that occurred at the same time many policy-makers were dismissing the notion that a farm bill could or should be done before current law expires at the end of the 2002-crop year.

One major factor that continually propelled the farm bill forward was the unity of a Farm Bureau-led coalition of 20-30 agricultural groups that in early 2001 issued a call for \$12 billion more per year in farm spending. Stallman said the unified effort was a "surprise" to those who believe ag groups can't work together. "I'm proud of that effort."

Stallman pointed to the House farm bill process as a model for what bipartisan action can achieve but acknowledged that the "political dynamic is totally different in the Senate." Farm Bureau, he explained, had one major goal in the Senate: to maintain the "funding cornerstones" contained in the House bill while keeping the bill moving through the Senate.

Bob Young, an analyst with the University of Missouri's Food and Agriculture Policy Research Institute, said he sees most factors pointing to a farm bill being finished soon. He predicted the House-Senate conference committee that will craft the final measure would start "five minutes after the Senate" completes its bill.

Young minimized the differences between the two bills, saying they provide producers with similar total pay-

ments. The Senate bill, he noted, is "front-loaded" with more generous payments at the beginning of its five-year span. The Senate payment rates are less than in the House bill but the provisions for updating bases and yields are more flexible and would result in payments similar to the House bill for most crops.

But the biggest difference, Young noted, is that the Senate measure ties payments to actual production while the House bill continues decoupled payments. "The final difference is whether you require production of a crop to get payments," he said.

Dick Newpher, head lobbyist for AFBF, rounded out the conference by assessing the prospects of getting a new farm bill done soon. "We're not talking about whether Congress is going to spend the money to boost farm income this year, it's only a matter of how they will spend it," he asserted.

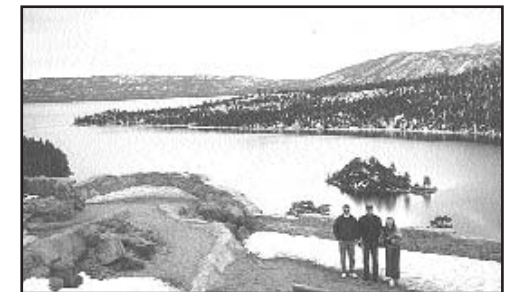
Members of Congress cannot go home in an election year without doing something to provide continued help for farmers and ranchers, he said. Newpher added that the economic stimulus package is at the top of Congress' list of unfinished business, but the farm bill is "an economic stimulus package for rural America."

Newpher called on all Farm Bureau members to contact their members of Congress and stress the importance of getting the farm bill done soon. "If everybody in this room does their work, I think we can get it done," Newpher said.



Welcome to Reno

Known as the "biggest little city in the world", Reno played host to the American Farm Bureau Federation Convention. Maryland Farm Bureau delegates enjoyed informative and inspirational sessions and were applauded for their strides in membership and programs.



Visiting Lake Tahoe

Maryland Farm Bureau Young Farmers Discussion Meet Winner Brad Morris, left, took time out from competition to visit Lake Tahoe while in Nevada. He visited the well-known resort with new friends from Florida, Jeb and Wendy Smith. Jeb was the discussion meet winner from Florida.



National competition

Brad Morris, right, listens intently during conversation at the national Discussion Meet for Young Farmers. Competing with him is Joseph Guthrie, left.



Gather together

Maryland Farm Bureau President Steve Weber, standing second from left, enjoys a meal with fellow state Farm Bureau members during the American Farm Bureau Federation Convention in

Grant heads to Frederick County

Katherine Trent, third from left, of the Philip Morris Co. points to a grant presented to The Great Frederick Fair for its City Streets, Country Roads educational program. Frederick County Farm Bureau members there to discuss the Shared Issues winner from left, are, Eleanor and Joe Free and Michael and Evelyn Wilcom.

