



NASCOE

Legislative Update

NASCOE Capitol Hill Visits

December 2024

NASCOE's leadership recently spent the week advocating for our priorities before both the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate. The week's activities also included visit with Farm Service Agency management to thank them for their service and review our shared goals for federal appropriations and any additional economic/disaster assistance programs.

The week included Joel Foster, Kayla Mattson, Amanda Ahrens, and David Wayne visiting with members from their respective states. The focus of our meetings included the House Farm Bill's Conservation Reserve Program, securing federal appropriations, and protecting the county committee system.

- *Conservation Reserve Program* – We discussed the need to remove Sec 12204 of the House Farm Bill.
- *Federal Appropriations* – Following the Program Analyst reclassification, we are continuing to raise the importance of adequate funding for FSA's salaries and expenses account. We have repeatedly stressed that new programs – disaster or Farm Bill – will require significant funds for implementation. It is important that Congress provide funds for implementation to help avoid cuts to ongoing programs.
- *Equity Commission* – Our team took time to discuss the impact of Recommendation 20 which would alter the current county committee system by allowing District Directors to hire and manage County Executive Directors.

It is important to highlight some of the responses we received from various Members of Congress and U.S. Senators. It has become clear that the House Farm Bill as drafted will not become law before the 118th Congress adjourns. We will need to continue our outreach and educate Members of Congress regarding our opposition to amending the management and operation of the Conservation Reserve Program.



**NASCOE Legislative
Co-Chairperson**

David Wayne
Kentucky

Cell: (270) 789-7972



**NASCOE Legislative
Co-Chairperson**

Amanda Ahrens
Kansas

Cell: (785) 672-0154

On federal appropriations, we enjoy support for county offices and field operations. However, the fiscal conservatives are actively discussing ending telework policies for the Washington, DC based USDA staff. As the new President's staff takes office, we expect significant actions to return Washington, DC staff to the Whitten and South Buildings. We have been clear on the importance of the County Office structure and our continued work servicing our customers.

The Equity Commission remains a priority for the Biden Administration which will be departing on January 20. We do expect the next Congress will include certain House and Senate members who will advocate for portions of the Commission's recommendations. This will include various introduced bills that focus on new actions implementing USDA diversity and equity recommendations. However, the shift of control in Congress and the White House will make this less of a priority for drafters of the next year's farm bill reauthorization.



As background, we had the opportunity to visit the below offices:

U.S. Department of Agriculture:

Zach Ducheneaux, Farm Service Agency Administrator

Steve Peterson, Farm Service Agency Associate Administrator

Marcus Graham, Farm Service Agency Deputy Administrator for Field Operations

U.S. House of Representatives:

Rep. Dusty Johnson (R-SD) Rep. Tracey Mann (R-KS) Rep. Sharice Davids (D-KS)

Rep Brett Guthrie (R-KY) Rep. Brad Finstad (R-MN) Rep. Michelle Fischbach (R-MN)

Rep James Comer (R-KY)

U.S. Senate:

Sen John Thune (R-SD) Sen Mike Rounds (R-SD) Sen Tina Smith (D-MN)

Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN)

Thank you for your continued support of NASCOE. Please don't hesitate to reach out to the legislative committee should you need additional information.