

They didn't even see us coming



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National Council
of Agricultural
Employers

Last week the National Council of Agricultural Employers (NCAE) concluded its 54th annual meeting in Washington, D.C., and the results were outstanding!

Farmers, ranchers, growers, custom harvesters, H-2A consultants, associations, attorneys and friends gathered to network with one another and glean the latest news from our nation's capital.

Kicking off the event was a glimpse into the future as Maryland FFA leaders shared their individual visions for their places in tomorrow's agriculture. Their passion and energy were infectious and revealed true promise of a bright time ahead.

Congressional power brokers seized upon the opportunity to address our meeting and attendees had the opportunity to hear from Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart (R-25th/FL), Congressman Jeff Denham (R-10th/CA), as well as the Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee Bob Goodlatte (R-6th/VA). Chairman Goodlatte's bill carrying an agricultural guest worker proposal, HR 4760 (Securing America's Future Act), is being whipped on the floor of the House of Representatives as I write this article. NCAE members asked for written details of enhancements discussed by the chairman in his comments, and this past Monday, Judiciary Committee staff responded to that

request. That's called getting results!

Leadership of NCAE was also invited to the White House to have a small-group discussion with the Trump Administration regarding the needs of agricultural employers today and into the future, securing support for common-sense reforms to NCAE member needs.

A political and regulatory update was provided and delivered to the audience by one of the top agricultural lobbyists in D.C. That presentation was followed by a fascinating economic analysis of changes coming to agricultural labor demographics. Farm safety was on the agenda as well.

Representatives from the U.S. Departments of Labor, State, Justice and Homeland Security (Citizenship and Immigration Services) shared the latest from their agencies, including the fact that demand for H-2A visas in the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2018 had set a record! Renowned domestic labor attorneys from FisherPhillips and CJ Lake shared legal insights with membership as to how to remain in compliance with the myriad labor regulations promulgated by the alphabet soup of different federal agencies.

Following a Hill Day briefing and a review of talking points, a role play was used to get attendees comfortable with messaging in congressional offices. Professional lobbyists

played the roles of staff and constituents, pushing ideas back and forth in that dynamic. Tips were provided on how best to stay on point and effectively advance ag employer interests in the critical discussions coming later that day.

Then, attendees headed off to the Hill to press their cases with congressional offices, drawing on their own personal experiences to highlight the critical importance of legislative action and the impact bureaucratic inaction has on their businesses. The feedback received following this coordinated effort has been outstanding so far and left NCAE with a lot of follow-up activity reinforcing member comments. In fact, several offices indicated how impressed they were with the thoroughness and attention to detail delivered in these constituent conversations and how much they were able to learn from NCAE members in such a short period of time.

Next year's Annual Meeting of NCAE will be Feb. 5-7, 2019, at the Westin City Center in Washington, D.C. If you're already a member of NCAE, we look forward to welcoming you to this exciting event. If you're not yet a member, please consider joining and plan to participate in another terrific affair. Plan as well to join us on Capitol Hill pressing the case that America needs agriculture!

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