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NEWS

Primus designated as STB chairman

President Joe Biden officially designated Robert Primus as chairman of the Surface Transportation Board (STB) starting May 11.

“NGFA congratulates Chairman Primus on his appointment to this well-deserved role,” NGFA President and CEO Mike Seyfert said in a May 13 press statement. “Under his leadership, STB can continue to pursue a modern and more balanced approach with knowledgeable and objective members. We look forward to continuing to work with Chairman Primus on fostering an efficient and competitive railway network for the U.S. agricultural supply chain.”

NGFA also led an agricultural letter of support urging the swift appointment of Mr. Primus as chair upon former Chairman Martin Oberman’s retirement. NGFA and the other 23 groups noted: “As a Board member for the past three years, Mr. Primus has demonstrated exemplary commitment and dedication to the principles of proactive oversight in STB’s regulation of the freight rail marketplace. Mr. Primus has been a leader in his push to improve rail service, create more rail-on-rail competition, and develop a more streamlined method for freight rail customers to challenge unreasonable rates.”

The letter of support is [available here](#).

Former Chairman Oberman announced in April that his retirement would begin May 10. NGFA issued this [statement](#).

Democrats issue statement on farm bill differences

Senate Agriculture Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., and House Agriculture Committee Ranking Member David Scott, D-Ga., issued a joint statement this week saying Republicans' farm bill proposals include policies "that split the broad, bipartisan coalition that has always been the foundation of a successful farm bill."

Democratic members of the House Agriculture Committee met with Chairwoman Stabenow and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y., on May 15.

In their statement following the meeting, Stabenow and Scott said: "America's farmers, families, workers, and rural communities deserve the certainty of a five-year farm bill, and everyone knows it must be bipartisan to pass. We need a farm bill that holds the coalition together and upholds the historic tradition of providing food assistance to our most vulnerable Americans while keeping our commitment to our farmers battling the effects of the climate crisis every day."

Democrats are primarily concerned about House Republicans' proposed changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and their proposal to remove climate-related parameters on \$13 billion in conservation funding.

House: Late last week, the House Agriculture Committee released a section-by-section [summary](#) of its proposed farm bill. Full legislative text is expected on May 17 ahead of the committee's markup scheduled for May 23.

Chairman Glenn "GT" Thompson's, R-Pa., Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) proposal in the Conservation Title includes provisions to prioritize the enrollment of marginal land in the program over productive farmland. House Agriculture Committee staff has indicated they will not attempt to raise the CRP cap.

The House Commodity Title maintains a market-oriented, decoupled farm program.

Funding is doubled in the proposal for the Market Access Program (MAP) and Foreign Market Development Program (FMD), both critical trade promotion programs run by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS).

Senate: On May 1, Chairwoman Stabenow released a 94-page summary of her bill proposal, the Rural Prosperity and Food Security Act.

Chairwoman Stabenow has included an increase in the CRP acreage cap from 27 million acres to 29 million acres by 2029. NGFA is seeking more details about how this increase is achieved in her proposal and what kind of land the acreage would be directed towards, but the Association has historically opposed any increases in CRP acreage that would result in the enrollment of prime farmland and large tracts of land that have been used for the production of grains and oilseeds.

. The summary document leaves open questions on the commodity title. The proposal does not appear to include any additional funding for trade promotion programs.

A section-by-section summary of the Senate proposal is available [here](#).

The current farm bill extension expires Sept. 30.

Biden announces tariff hikes on Chinese goods

President Joe Biden on May 14 unveiled tariff increases on \$18 billion in Chinese goods, including electric vehicle (EV) batteries, computer chips and medical products, while retaining Trump administration tariffs on over \$300 billion in goods.

White House leaders said the president's actions reflect U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai's four-year [review](#), which concludes that China has continued to engage in unfair business practices.

“American workers can outwork and outcompete anyone as long as the competition is fair,” Biden said in the White House Rose Garden. “But for too long, it hasn’t been fair. For years, the Chinese government has poured state money into Chinese companies...it’s not competition, it’s cheating.”

USTR also said it has proposed exclusions from the tariffs on more than 330 categories of industrial machinery to aid U.S. manufacturers, including producers of solar panels.

Several business groups released statements opposing the tariffs. “Throughout this process, USTR received hundreds of comments from businesses large and small that have been negatively impacted by the tariffs,” said the Americans for Free Trade coalition. “Maintaining the tariffs, and even increasing them in some categories, will lead to increased prices and nullify any progress the United States has made to combat inflation.”

NGFA will monitor any potential retaliatory actions by China that could result in reduced agricultural exports from the U.S. USTR will conduct a public comment period before the tariffs go into effect.

NASS releases census congressional district rankings

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) this week released the [Congressional District Profiles and Rankings](#) from the 2022 Census of Agriculture. The summary presents data by congressional district from the 118th Congress, including land, farms, market value of agricultural products sold, rankings and producer characteristics.

“These profiles present local data in a fast and easy-to-read format, allowing producers and all data users to quickly view and evaluate information,” said NASS Acting Administrator Joseph Parsons. “Congressional District Profiles and Rankings from the ag census are only available every five years. Providing ag census information at a congressional district level, in addition to state, county and nationwide data, allows data users to compare districts to each other, shows the value of agriculture in a district, and informs policy makers.”

NASS released the Census of Agriculture State and County Profiles on March 27. Upcoming releases include the Race, Ethnicity, and Gender Profiles on June 28; the Watersheds report on July 24; the American Indian Reservations Report on Aug. 29; and Zip Code Tabulations on Nov. 7. All products will be available at nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022.

Other products to be released this summer and fall include additional [census highlights](#) publications. Census of Agriculture Highlights cover topics such as information about producer demographics, commodity-specific information and more.

According to NASS, data from the 2022 Census of Agriculture found a continued decline in farms and farmland and a rise in the number of new and beginning (operating 10 or fewer years on any farm) as

well as young (under the age of 35) producers. Another continuing trend included a rise in internet access (79 percent compared to 75 percent in 2017).

EVENTS

CONVEY'24 to feature Columbia Grain CEO on future of automation

[CONVEY'24](#) will feature Jeff Van Pevenage, president and CEO of Columbia Grain International, on the outlook for automation in grain handling. He will share Columbia Grain's journey of automating a facility and provide insights on evaluating infrastructure, customers, labor, location, equipment, and operational efficiency.

CONVEY'24 an annual conference jointly hosted by NGFA, Grain Journal, and the Grain and Elevator Processing Society (GEAPS), is July 23-25 in Omaha, Neb.

Each year, NGFA, GEAPS and Grain Journal present this unique opportunity for grain handling employees and leaders to gain practical knowledge and training on real-world compliance issues, best practices and emerging industry trends. This year's focus will be on new technology and automation.

The early bird registration rate has been extended to June 17! Register to attend or exhibit at conveyconference.com.

New this year: DEGESCH will host a pesticide state-certification workshop on the afternoon of July 23.

Register for next People Spark leadership training by May 24

The deadline to register for the June 2024 leadership program hosted by People Spark Consulting is **May 24**.

NGFA and People Spark Consulting have partnered to further the mission to provide education and training to members at all levels in the agriculture industry. The [People Spark Leadership Transformation Program](#)® is a year-long course that focuses on practical application of leadership skills and tools. It starts with an 8-week intensive training, followed by 10 months of ongoing support to reinforce and sustain the learned skills. NGFA members receive a bonus private coaching session with their Leadership Transformation Program® registration. New cohorts begin monthly throughout 2024.

[Click here for information!](#)

The investment for the 12-month People Spark Leadership Transformation Program® is \$2,500. Use reference code: NGFA



SUPPLEMENTS

‘Succession Planning Success’ webinar recording available

NGFA and People Spark Consulting hosted a one-hour webinar on the three steps to take for business succession planning on May 16. View a [recording of this webinar here](#).

Co-founders of People Spark Consulting, Kristen Ireland and Erin Mies, guided the discussion of the steps, which include:

- How to address a legacy employee who may not be ready to retire,
- How to define the role based on where the business needs to go, and
- How to develop high-potential employees for these identified roles.

Extra Supplements

NGFA in the news:

Feed & Grain: [Robert Primus appointed Chairman of Surface Transportation Board](#)

American Ag Network: [Primus Designated as STB Chairman](#)

World Grain: [NGFA supports Primus as new STB chairman](#)

Meat & Poultry: [ATWG cautions about Canadian rail strike impacts](#)

International Bulk Journal: [NGFA urges Canadian leaders to avoid rail strike](#)

Other news:

Feed Navigator: [China approves safety of gene-edited wheat](#)

FreightWaves: [Canada’s labor board delays start of potential CN, CPKC rail strike](#)

Iowa News Now: [Sen. Chuck Grassley says negotiations over the farm bill are not going well](#)

Agri-Pulse [Nebraska, Iowa congressional districts among nation's top in terms of agricultural products sold](#) ([log in](#))

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