SPRING ADVOCACY TRAINING WORKSHOP RECAP

NFU hosted twelve Farmers Union members in Washington, DC at our national headquarters for our 2022 Spring Advocacy Training Workshop. The event brought together members from around the country to participate in a two-day workshop for training in public speaking, working with the media, serving on boards of directors, and tips and tricks for advocacy and lobbying.

For many, the training was their first glimpse into NFU’s extensive advocacy in Washington. Members had the opportunity to connect and discuss their roles in Farmers Union, and how they can take their farm and ranch experience and advocate for policies to better serve their communities.

Following a full day of training, the participants took their new skills and confidence and met with congressional offices on Capitol Hill to discuss issues of importance to family farmers across the country, including Fairness for Farmers, climate change and conservation, rural cooperative development grants, and farm stress. The event was a great success as members who may have had little prior experience with advocacy left Washington and returned home with a better understanding of the legislative process and confidence to engage with elected officials at the local, state, and federal levels.

April was another busy month in Washington. Congress returned from their district work period and the Capitol was bustling with floor sessions, votes, and a slate of committee hearings. All the while, NFU was getting ready to host our advocacy training event. With a jam-packed week on the Congressional schedule, the timing could not have been better, as it was a prime opportunity for our members to meet and push Members of Congress to support key legislation before the House and Senate.

FARMERS UNION MEMBER TESTIFIES BEFORE SENATE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

On April 26, Shelly Ziesch testified on behalf of Farmers Union before the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry in support of S. 4030, the Cattle Price Discovery and Transparency Act of 2022 and S. 3870, the Meat and Poultry Special Investigator Act of 2022.

Ziesch is a fourth-generation rancher from Pettibone, ND and serves on the board of directors for North Dakota Farmers Union. In her testimony, Ziesch called for greater transparency, price discovery, and fairness in cattle markets and discussed how these changes are critical to the survival of family farms and ranches.

Ziesch detailed several provisions in the cattle price discovery bill that will promote fairness and transparency in cattle markets, including:

- Establishing regional minimums for negotiated trades, which will preserve the cash market as an option for cattle producers and improve and preserve price discovery.
- 14-day slaughter required reporting, expedited carcass reporting, and mandatory reporting of cutout yield, all of which will give producers a better understanding of supply and demand factors affecting the market.
- Establishing a cattle contract library, which will give cattle producers insight
into contract terms they should consider or avoid when using AMAs.

Ziesch also offered strong support for the Meat and Poultry Special Investigator Act, which will strengthen enforcement of existing competition laws.

“The Packers and Stockyards Act has existed for more than 100 years, but a lack of enforcement has allowed consolidation and anticompetitive practices to continue,” testified Ziesch. “USDA and the Department of Justice need stronger tools to enforce existing laws. Senate Bill 3870 would give USDA the authority and resources it needs to make sure our laws are enforced the way Congress originally intended.”

FARMERS UNION DONATES $125,000 TO HELP UKRAINE

National Farmers Union and Farmers Union Enterprises have donated $125,000 to help with the humanitarian and agricultural crisis in Ukraine.

The contribution was directed through the World Food Program USA, the non-profit arm of the United Nations-affiliated World Food Program (WFP).

WFP has been on the frontlines of the world’s worst hunger crises, fighting hunger and famine since 1962. The organization is currently on the ground in Ukraine providing food assistance to those impacted by the war.

“The war in Ukraine is devastating hundreds of thousands of families, driving them from their homes and into hunger,” said NFU President Rob Larew. “While the scope of the humanitarian crisis is immense, American family farmers and ranchers want to help in the best way we know how: to provide food and humanitarian aid to those around the world who need it.”

“We are deeply grateful to the National Farmers Union for their support as we work to provide food assistance to 6 million Ukrainians in need, including farmers,” said Barron Segar, World Food Program USA President and CEO.

According to recent updates from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization:

- Farmers may not be able to harvest or plant crops or sustain livestock in 19 of 24 of Ukraine’s oblasts (an oblast is an administrative region within Ukraine).
- Destocking of small livestock has been reported in half of Ukraine’s oblasts and of large ruminants in a quarter of oblasts.
- In oblasts where displaced persons make up more than 15 percent of the current population, 20 percent of host households cannot meet their basic food needs.

Farmers Union stands united in support of Ukraine against the violence, hunger, and threats to democracy imposed by Russia’s invasion. We continue to keep the all the farmers and people of Ukraine in our thoughts.

Farmers Union member Shelly Ziesch testifies before the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.