

GEORGIA MILK REVIEW

December 2022 | Issue 104

Senate Passes 2023 Budget, Ag Labor Reform Not Included

The US Senate approved the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 on Thursday, December 22 in a continued effort to avoid a government shutdown before the holidays. The \$1.7 trillion budget bill will be voted on by the House on December 23 where it is expected to pass. The bill includes many big-ticket expenditures for the military, support for Ukraine, and many other initiatives on top of funding the regular business of government next year.

Agriculture received funding through [two bipartisan climate and conservation programs](#). The Growing Climate Solutions Act, sponsored by Senate Ag Committee Chair Debbie Stabenow and Senator Mike Braun, will allow USDA to establish a voluntary technical advising program and third-party certification program aimed at assisting producers in participating in environmental credit markets. Also included in the 2023 budget is funding for the Sustains Act sponsored by House Ag's ranking member (and soon to be House Ag Chairman) GT Thompson. This measure would allow private sector funds to supplement existing farm bill conservation programs that are habitually underfunded and overprescribed.

Also included in the \$1.7 trillion package is \$40 billion in disaster relief funding including \$3.7 billion directed to USDA for assistance for farmers, ranchers, and forestland owners impacted by hurricanes, wildfires, and other natural disasters in 2022.

Maybe more importantly, the budget bill does not include a proposal sought after by ag groups across the US. Senator Michael Bennet's Affordable and Secure Food Act would have dramatically reformed the H-2A visa program by providing visas to workers performing year-round jobs, updating the application process, and expanding eligibility for producers to participate. Bennet's labor plan would also have established a mandatory electronic verification system for all agricultural employment and created a path for current agricultural workers and their spouses and children to earn legal status after 10 years of work in the agricultural field. [A letter signed by over 200 industry groups](#), including Georgia Milk Producers, encouraged Congress to take action on agricultural labor reform and include Bennet's proposal in any year-end omnibus bill.

Ultimately, the ag labor provisions were not included in the final version of the bill that passed the Senate. It is unlikely Congress will act on ag labor reform next year after the 118th Congress is sworn in. Republican leadership in the House have stated no action will be taken on immigration reform (including legal status for ag workers and H-2A) until border security is addressed. Senate Democrats and the Biden Administration are unlikely to agree on any measure passed by House Republicans that includes funding for increased border security.

Farm Bureau Dairy Working Group Releases 2022 Report



American Farm Bureau Federation's Dairy Working Group has released its 2022 report "[Priorities, Principles, and Policy Considerations for Federal Milk Marketing Order Reform \(FMMO\)](#)." The Dairy Working Group was formed after voting delegates at the 2021 AFBF Annual Convention voted to create a task force to investigate milk pricing. The group was reaffirmed at the 2022 AFBF convention and met several times throughout the year before the AFBF FMMO Forum in October.

The report includes eight priorities for FMMO Reform: Return the Class I mover to the higher-of formula, increase Class I differentials to reflect changes in the marketplace, Make processing cost surveys of plants mandatory and audited by USDA to ensure collection of accurate data, tighten pooling provisions, update make allowances routinely with mandatory cost surveys, expand the number of products used in USDA's pricing survey, simplify and add uniformity to milk checks, and use modified bloc voting when adopting changes to federal orders.

The report also includes five non-federal order priorities aimed at farm bill and nutrition programs. First, the working group approves increasing the catastrophic margin levels in the Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) program, allowing producers to update production history for DMC, and updates premium alfalfa milk costs within DMC. In addition to the three recommendations for DMC, the working group recommends updating AFBF policy with regards to school milk regulations. The group proposes shifting jurisdiction of school nutrition and food programs in the House of Representatives from the Education Committee to the Agriculture Committee and advocating for the inclusion of 2%, whole milk, and flavored milk in schools.

The Farm Bureau Dairy Working Group report comes on the heels of the National Milk Producers Federation's adoption of FMMO reform recommendations from its own FMMO Task Force. The AFBF and NMPF working groups both agreed on returning to the "higher of" Class I formula and updating processes to ensure make allowances are accurately and periodically recalculated.

MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM GEORGIA MILK

I, like so many of us, am addicted to looking at my phone. It's just a tick or habit that I've developed. If there's nothing else to do, say, see, or pay attention to then I'm going to unlock my phone and scroll through Twitter or check the scores to the ball game or something. I try not to look at my phone on Christmas, but eventually I will find myself scrolling through social media and looking at posts wishing everyone a merry Christmas or showing off brand new presents.

For the last couple of years, there is one article that pops up on my timeline at some point on Christmas Day. I don't know who retweets it or shares it, but someone always does. It's a piece for **The Atlantic by Caitlin Flanagan** describing how the author was exposed to the true meaning of Christmas through the Charlie Brown Christmas Special. I've grown to love this short article because it reminds me to refocus on what's most important at Christmas.

The author writes that she grew up in a nonreligious household where Christmas spirit meant embracing the commercial elements around the holiday. Like the characters in the Peanuts Gang, her family put a lot of effort into creating the perfect Christmas with trees, presents, Santa, and more. But her perception of Christmas changed while watching the scene in the special when Linus takes center stage and recites Luke 2.

I love the way Flanagan describes hearing Linus's monologue for the first time. She writes, "From the minute Linus starts talking, I feel like I'm holding my breath. It feels as though I'm being called back to something, as though finally I've been reunited with something elemental...This is 17th-century prose describing something that supposedly took place 1,600 years earlier. So why does it feel like news from the front?" For some of us, the Christmas story Linus recites from Luke's gospel is very familiar. It's a story I have grown up with my entire life. But to Flanagan and millions like her, this story is like hearing breaking news about a major world event. This news changes everything.

As you and your families gather together to feast, exchange gifts, and spend quality time together, I urge you to take a moment to remember that buried beneath the mounds of presents and resting behind the glow of twinkling lights is the story of peace on earth and good will toward men.

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, good will toward men." Luke 2:8-14

Merry Christmas,



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Incoming Georgia Ag Commissioner Announces Transition Team

OCILLA – Georgia Agriculture Commissioner-elect Tyler Harper announced his transition committee that will serve as senior leadership advising his transition into office in January. The committee comprises trusted advisors who will continue to help assist with crafting legislative goals, hiring staff, building out policy agendas and more for the Harper administration.

Following the announcement, Harper issued the following statement:

“We promised the voters of this state that we would get to work on Day 1 to fight for our farmers, producers and consumers, advance our state’s No. 1 industry, and deliver the most efficient and effective Department of Agriculture in state history – and that’s exactly what we’re going to do,” Harper said in a news release. “I am tremendously grateful for this team of advisors who have stepped up to help guide our transition and ensure our administration gets off to a strong start.

“Over the coming weeks, this team will help put our plan to lower costs for families, invest in the next generation of agriculture, enhance the lives of our consumers and build on the success of our state’s No. 1 industry into action – and I look forward to working with them to accomplish that and more over the years to come.”

The Tyler Harper Transition Leadership Committee includes Committee Co-Chairs Jay Roberts and Sydne Smith; and team members Jessica Perdue, Jenna Saxon, Billy Kirkland, Stephen Lawson, Denise Deal, Chris Riley, Chip Starnes and Dominic LaRiccia.

Biden unveils stricter emissions rules for heavy-duty trucks

By Emma Newburger | CNBC

The Biden administration on Tuesday announced stricter standards on smog-forming emissions from trucks, vans and buses starting in the 2027 model year, the first of several federal actions aimed at limiting vehicle pollution. Medium- and heavy-duty trucks represent only about 4% of vehicles in the U.S., but due to their larger size and greater travel distances, the vehicles consume more than 25% of total highway fuel and comprise nearly 30% of highway carbon emissions, according to the Department of Energy.

The new rules from the Environmental Protection Agency are the first update to clean air standards for heavy-duty vehicles in more than 20 years. The standards by 2045 will result in a 48% reduction in nitrogen oxide, a 28% reduction in benzene, a 23% reduction in volatile organic compounds and an 18% reduction in carbon monoxide. All of these emissions can cause health problems for people.

The new rules will also help fight climate change, even though they aren’t likely to have any effect on carbon dioxide emissions. Nitrogen oxide is roughly 300 times as potent as carbon dioxide at warming the atmosphere and accounts for about 7% of all U.S. greenhouse gas emissions from human activity, according to the EPA.

The agency estimates the standards will result in up to 2,900 fewer premature deaths, 6,700 fewer hospital admissions and emergency department visits, 18,000 fewer cases of childhood asthma and \$29 billion in annual net benefits by 2045.

Michael Regan, the administrator of the EPA, said the actions would protect the health of 72 million people who live near truck freight routes in the U.S., including the most threatened populations in historically polluted communities.

“These rigorous standards, coupled with historic investments from the Inflation Reduction Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, will accelerate President Biden’s ambitious agenda to overhaul the nation’s trucking fleet, deliver cleaner air, and protect people and the planet,” Regan said in a statement.

Britt Carmon, the federal clean vehicles advocate at the Natural Resources Defense Council, said the new EPA standards fall short and the agency missed a critical opportunity to accelerate the shift to the cleanest vehicles.

“EPA now needs to move quickly to put in place the next round of standards that will accelerate the transition to zero-emitting trucks so that we can all be free from the tailpipe pollution that is harming our health and accelerating climate change,” Carmon said in a statement.

The EPA is set to propose in the spring separate greenhouse gas standards for heavy-duty vehicles starting in the 2027 model year. The agency also said it will delay making a decision until early next year on California’s requests to set its own heavy-truck emissions rules.

Vickie Patton, general counsel for Environmental Defense Fund, praised the standards and urged the agency to quickly move forward to recognize state standards adopted by states such as California that are aiming to phase out diesel fuel.

Jed Mandel, president of the Truck and Engine Manufacturers Association, an industry group, said the agency’s new standards are stringent and would be difficult to implement.

“Ultimately, the success or failure of this rule hinges on the willingness and ability of trucking fleets to invest in purchasing the new technology to replace their older, higher-emitting vehicles,” Mandel said in a statement.

The EPA’s standards will take effect 60 days after publication in the Federal Register.

Dairy Dawgs Win Scholarship Award

The UGA Dairy Science Club took home several awards as part of the Animal Agriculture Alliance's College Aggies Online program. The Dairy Dawgs finished 2nd overall in the club division earning a \$1,000 scholarship.

UGA Dairy Science Club also took home the Superlative Award for Most Creative Event and two awards in the Club Challenge category for their fundraiser for No Kid Hungry and the Dairy Fun Night campus event.

College Aggies Online is an initiative of the Alliance that connects college students, industry experts, and social media-savvy farmers to engage online about current and emerging issues facing the animal agriculture community. Throughout the competition, students learn how to spread positive, factual information about agriculture and tell their personal stories while actively developing their professional communication skills. In the club division, students host farm tours, campus events, food drives and more to engage with their peers about agriculture.

Registration for 2023 Flavor of Georgia Contest Now Open



The 2023 Flavor of Georgia contest hosted by UGA's College of Agriculture & Environmental Sciences is now taking registrations for next year's competition. Since 2007, Flavor of Georgia has launched new products into success and garnered more publicity and sales for products already in the market.

From rural farmers to urban businesses, successful and talented food artisans have emerged from all over to showcase the fantastic value-added products produced in Georgia. Over 1,5000 products have been entered in the contest since it began. Contest categories include dairy products, confections, condiments/sauces/seasonings, beverages, baked good, jams/jellies, and more. Last year's grand prize winner was Hart Dairy Chocolate Whole Milk.

Registration closes on January 30, 2023 with product submission taking place in early March. For more information on the competition, rules, and registration, visit UGA CAES's website at flavorofgeorgia.caes.uga.edu.

House Ag Committee Leadership Announced

Committee leadership in the U.S. House of Representatives will change in the coming term as Republicans won the majority of seats in the 2022 midterm. Republican Ranking Member G.T. Thompson of Pennsylvania announced earlier this month that he was tabbed to take over the House Agriculture Committee chairmanship for the 118th Congress. Outgoing chairman David Scott of Georgia announced in a [press release](#) on December 22 that he was elected to serve as the Democrats' Ranking Member.

Thompson was first elected to represent parts of northern and central Pennsylvania in 2009. Thompson has been a vocal supporter of including whole milk in school lunches and [comes from a dairy family](#). In 2018, Thompson received IDFA's Leadership Award

Scott first won election to serve Southwest Atlanta in 2003. A 2021 recipient of the IDFA Leadership Award, Scott chaired the Dairy Subcommittee in 2009 and has been a longtime advocate of school nutrition programs and the promotion of dairy in schools.

Upcoming Events

Georgia General Assembly Convenes.....Jan. 9
Georgia State Capitol

Georgia Dairy ConferenceJan. 16-18
Marriott Savannah Riverfront

Georgia Ag ForecastJan. 27
UGA Tifton Convention Center

**National Mastitis Council Annual Meeting..... Jan. 30-
Feb. 2**
Atlanta Sheraton Hotel

Dairy Margin Coverage Signup Closes..... Jan. 31
Contact Local FSA Office

Georgia Agribusiness Council Breakfast.... Feb. 1
Georgia Railroad Freight Depot

National Ag Census Survey Deadline..... Feb. 6
<https://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus/>

Georgia Farm Bureau Day at Capitol..... Feb. 14
Georgia State Capitol