

COMPASS

ISSUE 1 | JANUARY 2024



Reflections

By: Sharron Zoller, CWA State President #26



On a random building on a forgotten street in Nashville, while waiting for a stop light, I saw this plaque. The nine words –so simple yet powerful –resonated deeply. For forty-eight years, that's what has moved California Women for Agriculture forward.



It has been a great honor to have served as your 26th CWA President. It was January 2022, in Kelseyville!, that I shared my theme UNITED FOR AG. We are indeed stronger together. My vision—to educate, innovate and activate—in addition to the three goals to build our leadership, promote AG (internally and externally) and build collaborative partnerships, all dovetail with the CWA mission. My objective is to always leave the world a little better than I found it.

I am grateful to the members of the executive committee and all the CWA members who have worked together for the past two years' progress. Each executive committee member gained leadership strength, courage and confidence with every experience. Sometimes a confluence of events presented challenges. These challenges, however, provided a forum for a fresh perspective for problem solving, and an impetus for introspective examination which sparked pivoting inventiveness and most of all, an opportunity for inspiration.

What we do makes a difference. We can't do everything, but everything we do does makes a difference! Looking back with reflection I'd like to share some of our diverse portfolio of projects on the journey we traveled together:

- **Redesigned and Launched a New CWA Website** – telling our story, showcasing leadership and chapters, publications and events, and sharing CWA's history
- **Expanded Social Media Footprint** – increasing frequency and followers with Instagram (2K!) and Facebook
- **Increased Communication and Transparency** – implementing a weekly President's Newsletter, and promoting the organization's activities, CWA business, member's accomplishments, and AG current events and legislation

Continued on Page 2

IN THIS ISSUE

Last President's Message

By: Sharron Zoller, CWA Past President

President's Message Back to Our Roots

By: Debra Stroschein, CWA President

Shannon Douglass, New California Farm Bureau President

By: Shannon Douglass

Industry Leader

January Guest Seaker

Patricia D. McGurk-Daniel, Chief Patrol Agent

Federal Action – Recap and Outlook

By: Tracy Chow, CWA Federal Legislation Task Force Director

State Legislation Update

By: Taylor Roschen, California Legislation TFD

Impact of Ag Education

By: Laura Beltran, State Assembly Field Representative

January 2024 Convention and SWM Information

Upcoming CWA Events

Sharron's Message Continued

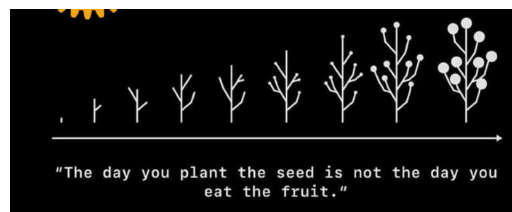
- Refreshed the Compass "Look"
- Promoted Leadership, Mentoring and Volunteering in Compass Articles
- Designed and Launched Ag Bites Club (ABC) — promoting agriculture weekly with "bites of AG" sent to all legislators, members, and AG leaders
- Increased Recognition of our CWA Brand Through Outreach
- Increased and Expanded Partnerships with Ag Organizations
- Continued to Offer and Improve Virtual Meeting Options
- Worked on Tightening SWM Structure — developing and implementing meeting norms
- Re-envisioned the May SWM — including a speaker line up of all women state, agency and partner leaders, advocates and decision makers
- Implemented a Full Review, Edit and Legal Update of Bylaws, Operating Policies and Procedures and Articles of Incorporation
- Initiated creation of a CWA Biennial Report

So many of California's and our nation's farmers, ranchers, and agribusinesses and support systems provide the intricate and essential role of delivering a safe, reliable source of food, fiber, and essential components to the world. This is vital to our national security.

Our members support our AG communities and promote, educate and advocate for CA AG to our many and varied audiences. The pace of change in the world of AG technology, digital communication, environmental and regulatory pressures and operational and marketplace demands has never been so fast. To be successful, we have to be nimble in our approach to promote our mission.

We have a legacy of which we are proud. We stand on the shoulders of our past leaders' dedication to CWA. It is our obligation to nurture this legacy, to build on it and to set our organization on a solid path for the future. We must continue to invest in our members and programs.

America's agricultural history has gone through cycles of prosperity and struggle. With resiliency, as innovators and entrepreneurs, we have had a most profound impact on every American each day. It is our mission to continue to support California agriculture as stewards — our generational legacy. As my CWA presidency #26 comes to a close, and with the ending of a year, it's time to think of new possibilities. I am very enthusiastic to be turning over the reins of leadership to CWA PRESIDENT #27. I look forward to Debra Stroschein and her executive team moving CWA forward, toward our 50th anniversary.



To every member of California Women for Agriculture, gratitude fills my heart. THANK YOU for everything that has made serving as your president so memorable.

Sharron Zoller, #26
CWA State President

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Back to Our Roots

By: Debra Stroschein, CWA State President #27



As the 2024 CWA President, my theme is “Back to Our Roots” and my goals to accomplish this will be working with the chapters and bridging getting back to the basics. We will be training the chapter leaders at meetings starting at the January convention on what is expected and what is needed. There will be more open communication between the executive board and the chapters. As I look back on 2023 and put together the biennial report and visiting the chapters throughout the state, the take home I got was that we all want the same thing, we all want to promote agriculture and help young adults to further their education.

My agricultural roots started at a young age when I would ride around with my dad checking pink bollworm traps. I thought it was the coolest because the trap looked like a spaceship to me. From there I knew I wanted to be in agriculture so I wrote a contract with my dad to work for free for him and he would save it for college. That is how my dream started. Now I am a contract researcher in California and have been working for 30 years. I have my crop consultants license for California in all categories. I also am a third-generation farmer in southern California farming mainly alfalfa. My family has been farming in Blythe since 1943 and I currently farm 1400 acres. I can see from many perspectives what agriculture faces today and it is daunting.

As I watched my dad farm and all the stresses of farming over the years of managing the risks and constantly trying to deal with things that were out of his control, I learned farming wasn't easy, but it was something he loved to do and he had a passion for it. The American Farmer still does the job that they love to do with the full passion that my dad had until the day he died. Now I inherited that passion and drive. I remember the good and the bad. The alfalfa market in California was at an all time high in 2022 but so were the inputs so our farming skills were put to the test. We had to fight the input costs as well as the drought. The other crops in California were at an all-time low in return. There were supply chain issues with materials not being available, which was another major concern for the farmer. This held true across the United States. All states were having the same issue.

In 2023 we still have these issues. Fertilizer prices seemed to level off and demand lowered a bit. But the drought was still a concern. Who knows what 2024 will bring us but I am glad that I have CWA as my family. My father always said the farmer is not just a farmer today he or she is a scientist, a computer expert, an engineer, a mechanic, a mathematician, and sometimes a psychiatrist. We need the correct tools and I feel one of the correct tools is having an agricultural advisor to assist you.

We need to get back to our roots, our history of why we started. I remember talking to my mom and others about why CWA started. It still brings chills to me. I fondly remember the story of Leona Lewis in the field with the foreman yelling “Butts up” and Leona said to me my butt was in the air couldn't go any higher, of course he meant the head lettuce butt end up.

To me it is all about our roots and our history. Let's make the next 50 years as great as our first 50 years. I need your help! My team needs your help.



The Compass is the external communication for California Women for Agriculture. Recipients include CWA members, agriculture organizations, associations, elected and appointed officials and other selected recipients. Chapters are encouraged to submit news, photos, announcements, articles, and suggestions. Directors should submit issue updates and information in advance if action is required.

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Shannon Douglass, New California Farm Bureau President

By: Shannon Douglass

What a week!

It was a pleasure seeing so many of you at the CFBF Annual Meeting in Reno. I still haven't quite had time to process the depth of emotions and gratitude that come with the honor of holding the office of President of this outstanding organization. As this all sinks in I continue to be humbled by your trust as well as the great responsibility that comes with it. Please know that I fully recognize and appreciate the commitment to service, communication, transparency, and wisdom in decision making that this office entails.

As you may have guessed, these past few days have been very busy as I've made getting into the office and meeting and communicating with our Farm Bureau staff members a top priority. Please allow me to share firsthand how much I value each member of the CFBF team. In my various capacities throughout the last 20 years I've had the opportunity to work with many of them personally and one thing that is always consistent is the fact that Farm Bureau staff are topnotch. Their dedication, commitment to excellence, and passion for the future of farming and ranching in California make this a team that could stand strong against any other.

Looking ahead, I look forward to meeting with you and your county leadership in my new capacity. I expect to be visiting regularly when I am not here in the office working with staff or balancing life on the ranch. While any transition of leadership certainly comes with a variety of steps and stages, please know I plan to continue being present at your key events and ask that you share those calendar items directly with the Executive Office as they are scheduled. Danielle Oliver will remain the Assistant to the President and is always available to serve as your first point of contact for scheduling and communication of organizational needs

to our Executive team. She can be reached at (916) 561-5527, doliver@cfbf.com and can ensure your key items are calendared for the awareness of our entire officer team and Board of Directors.

Additionally, for those who know me, you know I check email regularly and my phone is always close by. Please don't hesitate to continue to reach out to me directly if you have questions, comments or concerns. I both recognize and value direct communication and my personal contact information is as follows: Email: sdouglass@cfbf.com and Cell: (916) 805-1047

Over the coming days, weeks and months I will be meeting with the CFBF Board of Directors, fellow agriculture groups and industry partners, government agencies and elected officials, and of course, our County Farm Bureaus. I look forward to having each bring me up to speed on their ongoing priorities while we work together to strategize how to best serve California agriculture, and Farm Bureau, efficiently and effectively moving ahead.

On behalf of your new Vice Presidents Shaun Crook and Ron Peterson, and myself, I want to also take a moment and thank President Jamie Johansson for the work he's done for this organization over the past six years as President and the many years of service through the YF&R committee, County Farm Bureau board of Directors and as a CAFB Vice President before that. Jamie is an outstanding individual, friend and passionate advocate for Farm Bureau and California agriculture. We look forward to recognizing his service to this organization with an appropriate gesture of appreciation in the coming months.

Thank you again for the work you do for Farm Bureau and your passion and commitment to this organization and industry over the years. As we build on the strength of those who have come before us, we will continue to fight with steadfast commitment for the future of Farm Bureau, and the future of farming and ranching in California.

With great appreciation,

Shannon

CWA congratulates Shannon Douglass on her recent election to California Farm Bureau Foundation's President.

"CWA has done some great work in education-both children and adults. I'm thankful for the work they do and for getting to be a part of projects like AgVenture," said Shannon to Rebecca Harper, Lake County Farm Bureau Executive Director.

Industry Leader



Shannon Douglass, a diversified farmer in Glenn County, has been elected to a two-year term as president of the California Farm Bureau.

Douglass, who previously served three terms as first vice president, is the first woman to head the organization, which was founded in 1919.

“This is an exciting moment,” Douglass said. “Farm Bureau has provided me with tremendous opportunities as a first-generation farmer. I’m excited to be part of the leadership of this organization, which represents the diversity of farmers and ranchers in our state.

“The California Farm Bureau has long played an important role in working to protect the future of America’s most productive agricultural economy,” Douglass added. “We face abundant challenges in farming and ranching today. But California remains a great place to grow food, and Farm Bureau is committed to helping our state farmers, ranchers and agricultural businesses thrive for generations to come.”

Douglass succeeds Jamie Johansson, who served three terms as president, beginning in 2017. She was elected Tuesday at the Farm Bureau’s 105th Annual Meeting in Reno.

Douglass is an owner of Douglass Ranch in Orland, which raises cattle and grows walnuts, corn and

forage crops. She also co-founded CalAgJobs, an online listing of employment opportunities in California agriculture.

Douglass has served as a director of the Glenn County Farm Bureau and as chair of the California Farm Bureau’s Young Farmers & Ranchers State Committee. She is a graduate of the Leadership Farm Bureau program and the California Agricultural Leadership Program and participated in the American Farm Bureau Federation Partners in Advocacy Leadership program.

Douglass earned a master’s degree in agricultural policy, a bachelor’s degree in agriculture and a minor in agriculture business from California State University, Chico.

Shaun Crook, vice president of a family timber business and a real estate agent specializing in ranch, commercial and residential properties, was elected as the Farm Bureau’s first vice president. Crook has served three terms as the organization’s second vice president. He was first elected as president of Tuolumne County Farm Bureau in 2015.

Ron Peterson, a member of California Farm Bureau Board of Directors and past president of the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau, was elected as second vice president. Peterson is a cattle rancher and dairy farmer who also grows silage crops and almonds.

The California Farm Bureau works to protect family farms and ranches on behalf of nearly 29,000 members statewide and as part of a nationwide network of 5.3 million Farm Bureau members.

January SWM Guest Speaker

Patricia D. McGurk-Daniel, Chief Patrol Agent



In July 2023, Patricia D. McGurk-Daniel became the first woman in history to hold the Senior Executive Service position of the US Border Patrol’s San Diego sector. Chief McGurk-Daniel is the former Chief Patrol Agent of Yuma Sector.

Chief McGurk-Daniel entered on duty with the U.S. Border Patrol in 1999 as a member of USBP Academy class 406 and was assigned to the Nogales Station, Tucson Sector. She promoted to Supervisory Border Patrol Agent in 2004.

Chief McGurk-Daniel has completed assignments at the U.S. Border Patrol Academy in Artesia, NM, the U.S. Border Patrol Headquarters, the CBP Office of Intelligence and the CBP Office of the Commissioner in Washington D.C. where she advocated for the interests of operational and operational support programs at the national levels for uniformed and non-uniformed personnel.

She received the Mission Integration Award from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection’s Commissioner’s Office in 2012 and the USBP Exceptional Meritorious Achievement Award in 2019.

Federal Action – Recap and Outlook



By: Tracy Chow, Federal Legislation TFD

The ag policy landscape leaves 2023 with few big wins, ensuring a hefty agenda of unfinished work for 2024. A few developments (or lack thereof) particularly stand out and should inform all of agriculture's priorities and actions in the new year:

Loss of Champions

This year, California lost two long-time champions in key legislative positions. The death of Sen. Dianne Feinstein and removal of Rep. Kevin McCarthy as Speaker of the House (as well as his subsequent resignation announcement) leave a deep void of experience and influence for our state's agricultural priorities. For years, both fought for our needs in Farm Bills, disaster relief, annual spending bills, and water legislation.

These losses will force both short and long-term recalibrations of how our collective industry maintains its voice and needs in the federal government. It will be crucial to educate and expand our reach with the rest of the state representatives, as well as build coalitions with out-of-state allies around unified goals.

Farm Bill

Congress missed the deadline to reauthorize a new five-year Farm Bill, and with it the opportunity to enact much-needed reforms and updated resources for U.S. producers and consumers. It instead passed a yearlong extension – continuing all USDA functions and programs but punting the bulk of committee markups and negotiations into next year.

It will be essential to pass a new Farm Bill as soon as possible to prevent it falling victim to election year stonewalling. As of this writing, all sides remain far apart (at least publicly) on both policy and funding priorities.

Disaster

Even with year-over-year disasters becoming industry norm, the devastation this year truly stood out. Ag loss estimates hover near \$2.5 billion statewide, with significant raining, flooding, and pest pressures challenging producers and communities. The California industry raised its needs with Congress, and the Biden Administration made an official request for 2023

ag relief funding. However, Congressional action on passing disaster relief has yet to take off. Also, given that USDA just recently rolled out its relief program for 2022 losses, reprieve for this year's losses is likely far down the road.

Labor

Partisan divides over immigration grew even deeper, so another Congressional session went by without any movement on labor solutions. The only newsworthy item was the House passage of H.R. 2, a border security bill that includes harmful ag provisions; however, the bill is DOA in the Senate. Elsewhere, the Department of Labor proposed rules that favor unions and make H-2A even more difficult to use. The industry is aggressively pushing back on these proposals and will continue doing so in 2024.

Trade

The U.S. trade agenda remained hazy with a mixed bag of results. Indian retaliatory tariffs on certain ag products were finally lifted after five years. At the same time, U.S. trade officials continued fighting against Mexico's GMO corn crackdown and Canada's dairy management policies. After USDA forecasted ag exports to continue dropping in FY2024, Congress pressed it to act. USDA subsequently announced \$1.3 billion to boost export competitiveness into foreign markets, included targeted resource for specialty crops.

We expect to see continued actions by Congress to reassert its authority in U.S. trade policy and advocate for traditional market access, tariff reductions, and strong enforcement.

A graphic with a dark blue background. On the left is a circular seal featuring a sunflower at the top, a landscape with mountains, a river, and a farm with a horse and a person. The seal has the Latin motto 'AD ASTRA PER ASPERA' around the top edge. To the right of the seal, the text 'SAVE THE DATE' is written in large, gold, serif capital letters. Below this, 'AAW MID-YEAR MEETING' is written in smaller gold capital letters. Underneath that, 'APRIL 3-6, 2024' and 'AT HILTON GARDEN INN' are written in even smaller gold capital letters. At the bottom, 'MANHATTAN, KANSAS' is written in large, gold, serif capital letters. A double-headed arrow is positioned above the meeting details text.

California Legislative 2023 Review

By: Taylor Roschen, California Legislation TFD



California's 2023 legislative year has been characterized by a flurry of labor and environmental justice activism. The year began with hundreds of bills introduced to penalize the business community and while it was undoubtedly a "hot labor summer" when the points were tallied and the vetoes were finalized, the season was perhaps more "lukewarm."

Particularly with respect to labor policies, agriculture was the least successful. Early in the session, the Budget committee passed the clean up language to last year's farmworker card check law, AB 2183 (Robert Rivas), reminding us all that if the Administration is on board with a bill, there's little that can be done. Nevertheless, labor perhaps overplayed their hand with the number of proposals introduced. While it's not a clear cut success, the business community effectively morphed into damage control mode on several bills. SB 616 (Gonzalez), a CWA priority, was amended from increasing paid sick leave from seven to five days and a new workplace violence standard bill was amended from the more egregious version to simply reflect what Cal OSHA was workshopping anyway. And of course, Governor Newsom deserves a modicum of credit for his veto of SB 799 (Portantino) that would have provided unemployment benefits to striking workers.

And several business industry-wide initiatives, though successful, may require revision in 2024. SB 253 which requires businesses to account for their scope 1, 2 and 3 greenhouse gas emissions has yet to be deemed possible. And the passage of the \$25 minimum wage

for health care workers, may prove too expensive (tagged at \$4 billion/year) as we move into challenging budgetary times. This pass first and question later mentality may be the aftermath of the large turnover of legislators and the influx of new members who extended courtesy votes for bills in progress and were trying to build their network in a challenging Sacramento environment.

But outside of labor, specifically on water legislation, the agricultural advocacy coalitions shined. Nearly all the water rights and water supply bills failed or were held in committee. These included offering broad authority for the State Water Board to issue interim use restrictions, reforming pre-1914 senior water rights, obligating groundwater sustainability agencies to approve local groundwater well permits, among others. But it would be unwise to rest on these wins and we should expect more efforts in 2024.

As we look to the future and what to expect for the new year, there is plenty on the horizon. Advanced Clean Fleets, the state's medium and heavy-duty zero emission vehicle transition policy, begins for some fleets in January. The State Water Board will be hearing about probationary basins under SGMA in April, and our communities are continuing to be the canary in the coal mine about energy cost, supply and reliability. The theoretical threats loom as well—the role of artificial intelligence, labor supply and automation, and new packaging reform. The March primary and November elections will most certainly have an impact. And of course, California's famous political ambition will be quelled by a \$68 billion projected deficit—sidelining some of the more expensive (and mostly progressive) initiatives.

As the new Assembly committee chairs under Speaker Robert Rivas demonstrate their value and the Senatorial gavel is handed from Pro Tem Toni Atkins to Mike McGuire in February, there is certainly more work to be done.



WANTED
CWA MEMBERS
QUALIFICATIONS: LOVE OF CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURE
HOURS: FLEXIBLE
PAY: JOY OF VOLUNTEERING



RENEW YOUR 2024 MEMBERSHIP

Impact of Ag Education



By: Laura Beltran, State Assembly Field Representative for Cecilia Aguiar-Curry Lake County CWA Chapter's AgVenture program graduate

Laura shares her story and the impact of AgVenture

Your Connection with AG:

Throughout my career in the State Assembly, I have been fortunate to work for two outstanding legislators deeply connected to agriculture in very different ways, Majority Leader and farmer Cecilia Aguiar-Curry being my current employer. Working for both legislators, I realized my connection to agriculture. As a child, we often visited my grandparents' village, La Esperanza, Ameca, Jalisco, and I would play on my grandpa's big blue truck while eating sugar cane. My grandpa owned parcels of sugar cane and would haul his and his neighbors' sugar cane to the local refinery in the big blue truck. My grandparents were our gateway to Salinas, the Salad Bowl of the World. My grandpa migrated from Ameca to Salinas when the sugar cane season ended starting in 1960. When my family decided to emigrate to the U.S., we settled in Salinas. By then, my grandparents worked at different packing sheds down the valley. Growing up, I did not appreciate the history of Salinas Valley; I did not fully understand why it was named Salad Bowl of the World, why my elementary school was called John Steinbeck, or why our mascot was a red pony. As I got older and fully learned the language, I learned about the farmworker movement and the importance of Salinas Valley's agriculture in connection to the farmworkers.

Your Interest in gaining more information and background in AG:

Only when I began working for the State Assembly did I learn more about the other side of agriculture, the growers. I was fortunate to be invited to a similar program named AgKnowledge, where I had an eye-opening experience. I learned the agricultural history of the Salinas Valley, the importance of how

every wave of immigrants brought a new crop to the Valley, and how it shifted the local economy. I then began to view Salinas Valley in a different light and appreciate the hard work of the migrant field workers and the evolution of those same migrants becoming landowners and growers themselves.

How did the AG Venture program affect/help you:

When the opportunity came again to participate in a similar program, AgVenture in Lake County, now working for the Assembly Majority Leader Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, I volunteered in a heartbeat. In my line of work as a Field Representative, one of our primary responsibilities is to be the eyes and ears of the Assemblymember to understand what is important to their constituents. AgVenture has provided a gateway to meeting and learning from the experts of Lake County. I could compare and contrast the issues affecting farmers in Lake County and on the Central Coast with a more critical eye. I made connections with individuals I would not have had the opportunity to know. After every session, I shared with the Assembly Majority Leader what I had learned and possible legislation or background to issues we were researching. As an representative of a rural district, she would like to be everywhere and meet everyone, but it is impossible. AgVenture gave me an opportunity to meet and learn about Lake County Agriculture in four sessions, something I don't know I would have had the chance to accomplish without the program.

It would also be helpful for the CWA members to give suggestions on some strategies to best capture the attention of a legislator concerning a topic/bill?

An Assemblymember goes through hundreds of bills each year. Asking for a meeting with them or their staff early in the process, February and March, will give you an opportunity to express your support or concerns before they may have to vote on it in late March through May (in their house) or August if it is a bill from the other house. If they are not available, making the same presentation to their local or Capitol staff is also valuable. Local staff provide constituent feedback to Capitol staff. Capitol staff makes a vote recommendation on every bill being considered by their Assemblymember or Senator. Making the connection to why the bill or issue has importance

to the district is always useful, in addition to your personal perspective on how it will affect you. Letters help, but taking the time to meet with staff or the Legislator is vital. The Legislature is a diverse collection of people representing various parts of California and multiple points of view. Making your perspective relevant to them is the most effective way to advocate for them to support your position.

I was wondering Cecilia would have some comments about her position, the women's caucus roll in the legislature and her thoughts for next year?

Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas recently appointed Assemblymember Aguiar-Curry as the Assembly Majority Leader. This is the first time in the history of California that all three leaders – Speaker, Majority Leader, Speaker pro Tempore – all are representatives from small towns. This is incredibly important to small cities, and rural and agricultural communities. She shares the Speaker's commitment to collaborating with all of the Assembly colleagues and their partners in the Senate and Newsom Administration. Assemblymember Aguiar-Curry, appointed Thanksgiving week to Assembly Majority Leader, served as the Speaker Pro Tempore since July 2023,

and in the State Assembly since December 2016. She also serves as Vice Chair of the Legislative Women's Caucus. She has been an accomplished legislative advocate for women and children, California's working families, local governments, agriculture and its employees, small cities and rural communities, and access to health care, education, and economic opportunity for all Californians.

I am grateful for the opportunity to learn about the agriculture and history of Lake County. Thank you to CWA for providing a safe space to discuss the various aspects of agriculture that affect us economically and socially. The most valuable part of AgVenture was making connections with my classmates and understanding the agricultural land I helped represent and its constituency.

Side note:

My grandpa has passed away, and his land was divided among his 10 children. My family will continue to grow what my grandpa started, once sugar cane and corn, and now Agave. I am more appreciative than ever of my grandpa's hard work; being a farmer is truly all for the love of the land.

January 2024 Guest Speakers

Toni G. Atkins, Senate President pro Tempore



Toni G. Atkins (D-San Diego) was born and raised in rural southwestern Virginia, the daughter of a miner and a seamstress, and graduated with a bachelor's degree in Political Science from Emory & Henry College in Virginia.

In 1985, she moved across the country to San Diego, California, to help care for her sister's young son while her sister served in the U.S. Navy. In San Diego, before becoming involved in public service, Atkins Senate President pro Tempore, committed herself to providing safe access to healthcare for women, becoming Director of Clinic Services at Womancare Health Center at the age of 27.

Elected by voters to the state Assembly in 2010, Atkins served there for six years. In 2014, her colleagues selected her to be the Speaker of the Assembly. Atkins counts a \$7.5-billion water bond and creation of the state's Earned Income Tax Credit among her proudest accomplishments in the Assembly.

In 2016, Atkins was elected to represent the 39th District in the state Senate. After just one year, she was selected by her colleagues to serve as Senate President pro Tempore. In March 2018, she was sworn in, becoming the first woman and the first openly LGBTQ person to lead the Legislature's upper house. Atkins is the first person in 150 years, and the third person in California history, to lead both houses of the Legislature.

Status of the Farm Bill

On November 16, 2023, President Biden signed a funding bill that extends the 2018 Farm Bill for another year.

The funding resolution received bipartisan support, passing the House in a 336-95 call and the Senate 87-11. It allows for some breathing room for lawmakers to write a new farm bill, although farm groups and advocates urge legislators not to take too long.

In a conversation earlier this month with a staffer at the House Agriculture Committee, he referred me to the article below referencing Congressman G.T. Thompson's, Chair of the Ag. Committee, comments on the Farm Bill.

Published Nov 7, 2023, in the on line, Pro Farmer of the Farm Journal

— **G.T. Thompson extends his farm bill extension timeline.** Rep. G.T. Thompson (R-Pa.), Chairman of the House Ag Committee, continued to express optimism about the possibility of passing a new farm bill in December in the House of Representatives. He made this statement during the American Bankers Association's 71st Agricultural Bankers Conference in Oklahoma City. Thompson was asked about the impact of Mike Johnson (R-La.) being elected as Speaker of the House on the Farm Bill reauthorization, to which he confidently responded that they are determined to get the farm bill done.

However, Thompson acknowledged that an extension of the current farm bill would still be necessary while the Senate and others complete their work on the farm bill. He explained that even if they had passed a farm bill last September, a long-term extension would have been required because both the House and Senate versions need to be reconciled through a conference process. Additionally, USDA needs time to align its provisions with the emerging farm bill. So, this is a change in Thompson's prior farm bill extension thoughts.

Thompson mentioned that the House's extension language is currently being assessed by the Congressional Budget Office, and if approved, it would extend the current farm bill until the end of the fiscal year (Sept. 30). He expressed his desire to receive the extension and new bill language on the House floor as an early Christmas present, emphasizing his goal of acting as quickly as possible in this regard.

Comments: Not many think the House will complete a new farm bill this calendar year. Thompson also identified key issues in the farm bill including finding funding to make changes to the farmer safety net, potentially addressing base acres and other changes that have been well known through the process so far — issues still without a consensus.

— **One hurdle in extending 2018 Farm Bill: \$100 million in funding for 'orphan' programs.** Even though both House and Senate Ag panel officials and staff have been looking for billions of additional dollars to help improve the Title I safety net, it appears a far smaller amount, \$100 million, is needed to help fund the around 20 so-called "orphan programs," which are solely authorized and funded under the farm bill rather than other appropriations streams in Congress. That discussion is taking place now.

President of the American Farm Bureau Federation, Zippy Duvall, echoes that statement, asking the House and Senate to "stay focused" on creating a new, modern Farm Bill. "The current bill was written before the pandemic [started], before inflation spiked and before global unrest sent shock waves through the food system. We need programs that reflect today's realities," says Duvall. "While an extension is necessary, they're running out of time to write a new bill."

The leaders of both House and Senate agricultural committees seem to understand those fears, issuing a joint statement reaffirming their commitment to a new piece of legislation. "As negotiations on funding the government progress, we were able to come together to avoid a lapse in funding for critical agricultural programs and provide certainty to producers. This extension is in no way a substitute for passing a five-year Farm Bill and we remain committed to working together to get it done next year."

Discussions and negotiations on the new Farm Bill have been stymied by opposing views on issues such as crop subsidies and funding for support programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which makes up around 80 percent of the bill's spending. Republicans have pushed for more work requirements and stricter limits on SNAP accessibility, while Democrats have opposed the ideas.

In an interview, Dec. 8, 2023, Rep. Austin Scott, R-Ga., spoke about the possibility of splitting off the SNAP program from the Farm Bill. Concerns are that the SNAP program's share is 80+% of the Farm Bill and the percentage each cycle.

This information was current several weeks ago at the time of publication of this Compass. This is a fluid topic and may have changed in the ensuing weeks.

Melissa Hurtado, California Senate Senator



State Senator Melissa Hurtado is the youngest woman ever elected to the California State Senate. Her Senate District — in California's great Central Valley — is home to some of the richest and most fertile farmland in the world, one of the top oil-producing counties in the United States and resilient working-class families who power the Valley economy.

Melissa is the first from her family to graduate from college—she attended Sacramento State University, where she received her degree in Political Science. Prior to becoming the youngest woman ever elected to the California State Senate in 2018, Melissa served on the Sanger City Council (2016.)

In the Legislature, Melissa is known as a thoughtful policymaker who works across party lines to improve the quality of life for residents and to ensure rural voices are heard at all levels of government. She focuses on rural community issues that often go unheard in the State Capitol — access to clean air and water, food insecurity, inequities in environmental policies, agriculture and access to health care in rural communities.

Jason Rollo, Program Manager for Community Relations in the External Affairs, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California



Jason Rollo is a Program Manager for Community Relations in the External Affairs group for the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, with a focus on the Colorado River and more specifically the Palo Verde valley. In this role, he deals with stakeholder engagement issues involving Metropolitan about water infrastructure, current key water issues, agriculture, and legislation to Metropolitan directors, member agencies, elected officials, business leaders, NGO's, community leaders, and the general public.

Before coming to Metropolitan, Jason served as the operations manager in the ramp service division for United Airlines at Los Angeles International Airport. In his capacity as an operations manager, he oversaw 10 staff and 350 union workers in the daily operations involving ramp service.

Jason serves as the appointed Director for the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California on the Palo Verde Valley Community Improvement Fund (CIF), Director and current chair on the Whitehead Leadership Society (WLS) for the University of Redlands, and involved with several other non-profit organizations.

Jason graduated from The University of Redlands in 2016 with a bachelors of science in business and went on to complete his masters in public administration in public sector management and leadership concentration at California State University, Northridge.



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U P C O M I N G C W A E V E N T S



March Statewide Meeting
March 9 – 10, 2024
March 8 Evening Social
March 9 Fantastic tours in Ventura County
March 10 Statewide meeting

January Convention & SWM,
So. District, San Diego, CA
January 5-7, 2024

March 2024 SWM, Ventura, CA
March 8-10, 2024

AAW Mid-Year, Kansas
April 4-6, 2024

May 2024 SWM, Sacramento,
CA

AAW Fly-in, Washington, D.C.
June 2024

September SWM, Ag Booster
BBQ, Fresno
TBD

AAW 50th Anniversary
Convention, Wisconsin
November 2024

November 2024 SWM
TBD

January 2025 Convention &
SWM
TBD

March 2025 SWM
TBD



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