



Nebraska Farm Bureau's voting delegates reiterated their support for efforts to reform Nebraska's tax system as a means to provide tax relief and help enhance Nebraska's economic competitiveness. Property tax relief was chief among concerns discussed by delegates to the Nebraska Farm Bureau Convention held Dec. 3-4, in Kearney.

"When it comes to funding for schools, roads and other local infrastructure funded through property taxes, Nebraska farmers and ranchers continue to carry a disproportionate share of the property tax load in rural areas and that continues to be a major concern for our members," said Jay Rempe, Nebraska Farm Bureau vice president of governmental relations.

Delegates noted that reducing property taxes in general and reducing the percentage of property taxes paid by agriculture should be a priority in any future tax relief or reform efforts. The body also noted interest in looking at other ways to provide tax relief to farmers and ranchers such as removing the sales tax on farm equipment repair parts.

"There are numerous ways to deliver tax relief, but controlling spending is a part of providing property tax relief. The House of Delegates renewed their support for levy caps and budget limits in addition to calling on local governments to seek efficiencies," said Rempe.

Management of Nebraska's water resources was also a top issue for delegates as they lent support for the study and implementation of conjunctive management projects by natural resources districts, irrigation and power districts, and the Department of Natural Resources.

Conjunctive management is a process that utilizes the connection between ground and surface water to maximize water use, while minimizing impacts to streamflows and groundwater levels in an effort to increase the overall water supply and stability of the supply.

"Agriculture doesn't exist without water and Nebraska's competitive advantage is heavily dependent upon our ability to manage water in a way that allows for irrigation and other agriculture uses, while also protecting municipal, environmental and other water users," said Rempe.

Delegates also passed resolutions opposing EPA's practice of aerial flyovers of livestock farms

for regulatory and surveillance purposes. The practice has been a point of contention for livestock farmers who are concerned about privacy and confidentiality of their farming operations.

Delegates showed support for new federal trucking regulations that alleviate some of the burdens on farmers and ranchers in the transportation of agriculture commodities and equipment and called on the state of Nebraska to take action to comply with the new federal requirements.

The prospect of establishing a state beef checkoff program in addition to the national beef checkoff was also discussed by delegates. The body lent support to the concept, provided a referendum vote of cattle producers supported such a program, no checkoff dollars would be used for lobbying, and that the program would include refund provisions for those choosing not to participate.

The House of Delegates also conducted elections for positions on Nebraska Farm Bureau's Board of Directors. Delegates re-elected Mark McHargue of Central City to the position of first vice president, while also re-electing Nathan Bartels of Elk Creek and Don Benner of Central City and to the state board. Bartels will continue to represent District 1 which covers Cass, Douglas, Gage, Johnson, Lancaster, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, Richardson, Sarpy, and Saunders counties. Benner will continue to represent District 2 which covers Boone, Burt, Colfax, Cuming, Dodge, Merrick, Nance, Platte, Stanton and Washington counties. Myles Ramsey of Kenesaw was newly elected to the position of District 5 director that represents Adams, Buffalo, Franklin, Greeley, Hall, Howard, Kearney, Phelps, Sherman, Valley and Webster counties.