

A Friend of Agriculture - Senator Jerry Moran (R-KS)

by Jon Dockter, NAFA

In recent years, NAFA and its members have had the pleasure of working closely with Senator Moran (R-KS) and his staff on issues important to the alfalfa and forage industry. Recently, Senator Moran visited with NAFA about his start in politics, ag research, and the Farm Bill.

When did your interest in politics begin?

I grew up in Plainville, just down the road from Bob Dole's hometown. Plainville is a place where folks know and look after their neighbors. Much of what I know about people I learned early in my life by working at the local hardware store, swimming pool, drugstore, and my paper route. My dad, a World War II veteran, worked in the oilfields of Kansas and my mom, who grew up in the Depression, was the lady you paid your light bill to. My parents worked hard, avoided debt, paid their bills, and wanted to make sure my sister and I had the chance to pursue our dreams.

As a kid, I enjoyed reading about politics, history, and government. People such as my fourth grade teacher Mrs. Pruter, helped me develop an interest in our country and public service. Because of my teachers' interest in me, I am part of the first generation in our family to graduate from college.

While at the University of Kansas I was offered an internship in Rep. Sebelius' Washington office. I was having a great time in college and was hesitant to go – but my parents urged me to “see the world,” and I spent the summer of 1974 on Capitol Hill at the peak of the Watergate scandal. The experience changed my life. For the first time I thought maybe it was possible for a small-town kid from Kansas to come to Congress and make things better.

How difficult is it to maintain an adequate safety net for farmers in the face of growing public sentiment against farm subsidies?

It's vital that Americans not forget the days of the Dust Bowl. The 1930s were often called “the worst hard time” – a time when vast expanses of alfalfa and corn fields were turned into deserts and devastation. Today, America's farmers are the reason the U.S. enjoys the most abundant and affordable food, fiber, feed, and fuel supply in the world. The business of farming

carries substantial risk – particularly when input costs are at record highs and rainfall is at a record low.

A safety net protecting against drought and damaging weather makes certain farmers and ranchers will survive a failed crop year. Crop insurance provides this certainty. Its effectiveness is enhanced by the public-private partnership of crop insurance delivery, which provides timely and personalized service to producers. This partnership also benefits taxpayers, as it combines private sector and government resources



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to financially support this protection for producers regardless of region or size. I will continue to work to ensure all Americans understand that a viable agricultural economy and effective crop insurance protection are beneficial to both rural communities and consumers.

As a Senator from a largely rural state, what is most difficult in advocating for agriculture?

Telling agriculture's story has to be first and foremost as we advocate for our nation's farmers and ranchers. There is often a disconnect between rural America and the rest of the world. We need to continue to educate consumers on where their food, fuel, and fiber come from and the process in which it is grown. Helping consumers understand a farmer plants alfalfa, beef and dairy cows eat it, and that provides a hungry world with nutrition is vital

when we have conversations about the need for investment in agriculture.

As an Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee member, you have supported Alfalfa and Forage Research. Where does this research funding stand?

The FY 2013 Agriculture Appropriations Bill was included in the recent Continuing Resolution. The Agriculture Appropriations Bill contained Report Language that directed USDA to prioritize Alfalfa and Forage Research. This is a huge step in the right direction for this type of research. We will continue to advocate for Alfalfa and Forage Research and make sure it has a place in future Agriculture Appropriations Bills.

You understand the importance of agricultural research and how it affects our global competitiveness. Considering the current budget atmosphere, how do we make sure we don't lose our competitive edge?

Agriculture research is of the utmost importance and yields huge returns for producers and consumers – domestic and abroad. Investment in agriculture research is necessary if we are going to continue to clothe and feed a cold and hungry world as the population is expected be 9 billion by 2050. Investing in technology that will help agriculture become more efficient and productive should be a priority as we develop agriculture policy.

Knowing how important farm policy is to you, how do you influence the Farm Bill process?

I am a member of the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee and have influence over investment in the programs the Farm Bill authorizes. This is a helpful position to be in when it comes to agriculture research. I will continue to stand up for agriculture and agriculture research during my time in the Senate through not only my role on the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee and but also through the amendment process and by addressing agriculture's priorities with my Senate colleagues.

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