

# Wisconsin Farmers Union: Farmers Union members stress need for a strong farm bill

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## **Farmers Union members stress need for a strong farm bill**

*Fly-In attendees addressed by Secretary Perdue, top USDA Officials, members of Congress*

**WASHINGTON** – Amidst historic ag trade disruptions and deeply declining net farm income, 350 family farmers and ranchers gathered in Washington, D.C. this past week to meet with members of Congress and weigh in on legislative priorities for farm country.

Nineteen Wisconsin Farmers Union members were among those taking part in the National Farmers Union Fly-In Sept. 11-14. Participants visited the U.S. Department of Agriculture, where they heard from U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue, other top USDA officials and the office of the U.S. Trade Representative. The farmers then made their way to Capitol Hill for a Farm Bill Forum.

Throughout the fly-in, the farmers visited all 535 congressional offices to share their personal stories on how federal level policies impact their families and communities. NFU also honored congressional champions for family agriculture with the organization's highest legislative honor, the Golden Triangle Award. Sen. Tammy

Baldwin and Rep. Mark Pocan were among this year's recipients.

"With farmers hurting across the countryside, the fly-in is a key opportunity for lawmakers to put a face to the issues impacting rural America and to help them understand the importance of passing a strong farm bill," said WFU President Darin Von Ruden.

"Net farm income has plummeted by nearly 50 percent over the past five years, leaving a majority of family farmers earning negative farm income and many of them in severe financial strain," said NFU President Roger Johnson. "At the same time, farmers are seeing commodity prices drop even further due to an escalating trade war with China and other top trading partners. Important markets are being lost indefinitely, and therefore long-term demand for U.S. farm products."

Farmers Union members pushed for passage of a farm bill that supports family agriculture, strong protections from international trade market disruptions, and expansion of the American-grown biofuel market. The Wisconsin delegation also expressed the direness of the dairy crisis and the need for the industry to pull together and explore options like inventory management.

WFU President Darin Von Ruden, Westby, and National Farmers Union Vice President Patty Edelburg, Scandinavia, were joined by board, staff and members at the fly-in, including: Chris Holman, Custer; Rick Adamski, Seymour; Matt Sheaffer, Brodhead; Keith Kreager, Marathon; Justin Briggs, Stratford; Sarah Lloyd, Wisconsin Dells; Sarah Heck, Durand; Alicia Razvi, Stevens Point; Kara O'Connor, Madison; Virginia Drath, Emerald; Bobbi Wilson, Madison; Danielle and Jesse Endvick, Holcombe; Dennis Rosen, Emerald; Caleb and Lauren Langworthy, Wheeler; and Camryn Billen, Chippewa Falls.

The trip to D.C. kicked off what will be a year-long experience in the NFU Beginning Farmers Institute for Jesse and Danielle Endvick, who raise beef cattle on their Chippewa County farm. For Billen, it was the first step in her role of representing youth from across the nation as a member of the NFU National Youth Advisory Council, a position she was elected to by her peers during Farmers Union All-States Camp this summer in Bailey, Colo. For Caleb and Lauren Langworthy of Blue Ox Farm near Wheeler, the journey marked the conclusion of a year-long participation in the Farmer Union Enterprise Program, which engages young leaders from a five-state region in interactive leadership development activities.

**GROUP PHOTO CUTLINE:** The Wisconsin group attending the 2018 National Farmers Union Fly-In to Washington, D.C. Sept. 11-14 included, left to right, (front row) Keith Kreager, Marathon; Virginia Drath, Emerald; Alicia Razvi, Stevens Point; Justin Briggs, Stratford; Sarah Lloyd, Wisconsin Dells; Jesse and Danielle Endvick, Holcombe; (middle row) Lauren Langworthy, Wheeler; Camryn Billen, Chippewa Falls; Sarah Heck, Durand; Bobbi Wilson, Madison; National Farmers Union Vice President Patty Edelburg, Scandinavia; Rick Adamski, Seymour; (back row) Matt Sheaffer, Brodhead; ; Kara O'Connor, Madison; Caleb Langworthy, Wheeler; Dennis Rosen, Emerald; Chris Holman, Custer; and WFU President Darin Von Ruden, Westby.

“What future are we leaving for the next generation?” longtime Wisconsin Farmers Union member Dennis Rosen of Emerald asked during a Q&A with USDA officials Sept. 12 during the National Farmers Union Fly-In. Rosen’s concerns hinged on continuing consolidation in ag sectors.