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## **Jim Miller & Dallas Tonsager picked for empty posts at USDA**

**By Agri-Pulse Staff**

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Help for the understaffed and frustrated U.S. Department of Agriculture arrived late Friday afternoon with a White House announcement of choices for two key posts. President Barack Obama intends to nominate James W. (Jim) Miller to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services and Dallas P. Tonsager to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Rural Development.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack who has complained about the long vetting process for presidential appointees welcomed the appointments, saying that “Jim Miller and Dallas Tonsager are well aware of the challenges and opportunities in rural America. They have dedicated their lives to enhancing the success and improving the lives of farmers, ranchers and those living in rural areas.”

Miller currently is Chief of Staff for the National Farmers Union, a position he accepted in 1999 after serving four years as Senior Analyst for Agriculture and Trade on the majority staff of the Senate Budget Committee. Miller also has served as Chief Economist for the National Farmers Union and as Vice President for Government Relations for the National Association of Wheat Growers.

Miller operated a fourth-generation family farm in eastern Washington for over 20 years and served as President of the National Association of Wheat Growers in 1987. He was Co-Chairman of the Canada-U.S. Joint Commission on Grains, a federal commission established to resolve grain trade issues between the two countries. He is a graduate of Washington State University. He and his wife, Sandy, have two sons and two grandsons.

Tonsager currently serves as a board member of the Farm Credit Administration (FCA), a position to which he was appointed in 2004. He also is a member of the Board of Directors of the Farm Credit System Insurance Corporation. Prior to his appointment to the FCA, he was Executive Director of the South Dakota Value-Added Agriculture Development Center, where he coordinated initiatives to better serve producers who developed value-added agricultural projects.

Tonsager was appointed by President Clinton as the South Dakota State Rural Development Director in 1993 and was named one of two outstanding state directors by

USDA in 1999. In partnership with his brother, he owns Plainview Farm in Oldham, SD, a family operation that includes corn, soybeans, wheat and hay. He is a graduate of South Dakota State University. He and his wife, Sharon, have two sons.

#30