

## Five questions for Lieutenant Governor Kounalakis

Eleni Kounalakis is proud to say she grew up as a farm girl, “hunting, fishing and growing things.” Her family grew mostly wheat in what was then a rural part of Sacramento County along the Sacramento River.

“I have a deep understanding and value of the important role that California farmers play in feeding our people here at home, in sharing our extraordinary products with the world and in contributing to our economy in this state,” said the lieutenant governor.



Kounalakis now represents California agriculture on the international stage. Governor Gavin Newsom recently appointed her for the new role of representative for international affairs and trade development, chairing a trade committee composed of a dozen agency directors. The lieutenant governor also works closely with the governor’s Office of Business Development, or GO-Biz, while chairing the Commission for Economic Development.

Recently, Kounalakis advocated on behalf of agriculture during two committee hearings on trade for the state legislature, one of which included the Chinese consulate general for San Francisco. International diplomacy is in fact in her background as well. Under the Obama administration, Kounalakis served a term as ambassador to Hungary.

She recently spoke with *Agri-Pulse* on the expanding role of what was once a mostly symbolic position, on President Donald Trump’s trade policies and on the increasing environmental pressures California businesses face.

- 1. Describe the role that your office has played in the past when it comes to trade.**

There's a long history of how the California state government has engaged in this very important economic issue. We used to have a Department of Commerce for the state, and it was eliminated in 2004.

What's happened since then is the work has been picked up by others. You find a lot of activity regionally. Cities and counties, chambers of commerce, economic development councils have stepped in. What the governor has wanted to do is make sure that because trade and agriculture are so important to our state, that we're doing as much as possible to be able to support these industries, which very often are the source of good-paying jobs – over 400,000 jobs related to agricultural alone.

## **2. Can you explain the new trade committee?**

We've had one formal meeting. At the staff level, they're meeting much more regularly.

Trade is obviously a big part of that. So is coordination on efforts of California to lead on combating climate change. Of course, we also talk about other elements of California leadership as well.

## **3. Governor Newsom has said he would be reopening trade offices in Mexico. How much of that work will be related to the US-Mexico-Canada-Agreement?**

What we're doing with trade offices is we're evaluating the best way forward. One of the things that we recommended to the governor, which he implemented, was the establishment of a unit within GO-Biz with three trade reps. We are in the process of looking for people to fill those positions.

The idea being that, rather than necessarily hiring people elsewhere, we should look at having a unit here of trade specialists and people who understand trade and who can be part-time working here in Sacramento, and part-time deployed to their regions, whether it's to participate in trade missions or whether it's to keep channels of communication open. That helps support businesses in California that are engaged in trade activities.

That's the first step that we've taken. Now we're in the process of evaluating trade offices. There's no question that Mexico is top priority. We're in conversation with the University of California – very engaged in international activity and programs – and they have an office in Mexico City. We're looking to see if we can run some joint programs out of the Mexico office. We'll be going to Mexico, in fact, in October. I'll be leading a group down there and we'll be further exploring what we might be able to do in cooperation with the UC.

NAFTA, as we know, has flaws. But for our ag community, it's very important that we continue to have the ability to sell our products in Canada and Mexico. We're tracking and watching the process of USMCA very closely. We, like others, do have some concerns about enforcement and implementation on the side of Mexico primarily. We're engaged and we're watching. But what we want to make sure is that, if we replace NAFTA with a newer, better agreement, that the issues that we care about – including labor, including enforcement, including environmental protection – this is the opportunity to get it right.

We're tracking it, we're following it, and we're providing input to make sure that it truly is an agreement that is a significant step up from NAFTA.



*Lt. Governor Kounalakis, far right, discusses agriculture and foreign trade policy with the Chinese consulate and state legislators.*

#### **4. When it comes to trade with China, is it frustrating seeing the disproportionate impacts on California while the decisions are made 3,000 miles away?**

We certainly know that the authority to negotiate trade agreements rests with the federal government. But we are disproportionately impacted in California. We are tracking this closely and we are working hard to make sure that our voices are heard and that our stories are told.

Unfortunately, the Trump administration is not overly interested or concerned about the impacts in California. This is to me very unfortunate and ill-advised, because the California economy fuels the economy of the whole country. Nevertheless, here we are. The impacts are real. The retaliatory tariffs by China are impacting our agricultural community a lot.

California produces over 80% of all the almonds that are consumed in the world – similarly with other products, like walnuts, dairy and pistachios.

What's happening is that in terms of supply chains, there's doubt as to the reliability of U.S. products as part of supply chains. Other countries are changing where they're buying their products. If you look at Australia right now, they have oversold their supply of nuts. They're exporting wine to China. They've taken up the place that California wines have held for a long time.

The using of the 301 violations as a justification for these tariffs should be to create pressure to get China to address some of the concerns that were part of the 301 complaints. We're for that. We want to see China respond. We want to see China become more open to U.S. companies and California companies. But the way the Trump administration has pursued this, it does not look at

the moment like we're going to compel China to make those changes. In the meantime, we are really only hurting ourselves. So we're very concerned.

**5. With economic development, are you addressing challenges agriculture faces with the regulatory environment?**

The governor has talked a little bit about this. It is harder to do business in California, we understand that. But there are enormous benefits of doing business in California.

The way I see it is we need to work closely with the business community to make sure that there are not unnecessary constraints. But at the same time, we are very committed to environmental protection in this state. We are very committed to an environment where business is able to flourish, but at the same time, we're able to build a strong society and a well-functioning system.

It's always a work in progress. Finding that balance requires the affected parties and the stakeholders to come to the table and work with government to find solutions when there are challenges that can be fixed. We have an open door here. We're very interested in hearing stories from the private sector.

## **California bill would classify independent truckers as farm employees**

State lawmakers will soon be casting final votes on a labor bill with sweeping repercussions for California agriculture. Assembly Bill 5 would affect about 2 million workers across industries. **Among the most impacted would be at least 70,000 small trucking companies throughout the state – a large portion of those being independent truckers who seasonally haul produce and livestock across the state.**

The bill has grabbed headlines for how it targets Uber, Lyft and other large gig economy businesses. AB 5 would reclassify as regular employees the independent contractors who account for much of the workload at these tech companies.

Ag groups opposing the bill say growers would be collaterally impacted, arguing it would designate them as employers for truckers traditionally hired as temporary independent contractors. It may require growers to update new business licenses, pay for benefits and meet fair labor requirements for the truckers.



**“These are the trucks and the owner operators that fill in those gaps that happen when you have a surge in needs, whether it’s a construction project or whether it’s a harvest,” said Greg Hurner, a political consultant for the California Truckers Guild. “The rice industry says that over 70% of their harvest is done through owner-operators.”**

Hurner was speaking in Sacramento on Tuesday, under a blazing afternoon sun and as truck horns blasted in the background from owner-operators circling the capitol in demonstration.



Hurner had also discussed the issue that morning with Senator Susan Rubio, D-Baldwin Park, along with representatives from the rice industry and the California Farm Bureau Federation.

The bill's author, Assemblymember Lorena Gonzalez, D-San Diego, has been individually negotiating exemptions for specific industries, such as licensed beauty care workers and emergency room doctors. Others still seeking exemptions are travel advisors, interpreters and real estate agents. Yet Gonzalez has singled out truckers in her arguments at the Legislature, blaming those companies for exploiting workers through independent contracts. She said the problem of misclassifying workers was "largely created by the trucking industry."

Gonzalez, who was a labor organizer before taking office in 2013, already has a beleaguered reputation with the ag community from her bill that established California's "ag overtime" law. Her 2016 measure narrowly passed the Assembly floor by eight votes before being signed by then-Governor Jerry Brown. The state began phasing in the new overtime limits in January.

On the Assembly floor in June, Gonzalez promoted AB 5 as saving impoverished workers from abuse while also helping businesses by narrowing the broad decision of the California Supreme Court last year. Known as the Dynamex decision (pronounced "dynamics") for the courier service involved, the court case put the spotlight on a dated labor code.

**Senator Brian Jones, R-Santee, has said the Dynamex case "might go down in history as one of the worst decisions that court has ever made."**

The court's ruling required employers to follow a three-part ABC test. An independent trucker would need to be free from the direction of a farmer, perform work outside of the usual farm business and be engaged in the "independently established" trade outside of the contracted scope of work.



The ABC test replaces the "Borello" standard, which sprouted from a 1989 California Supreme Court case involving a cucumber farmer. The court had ruled the grower must classify farmworkers as either standard employees or independent contractors, and not under the traditional "sharefarmer" agreements. If the current ruling goes into effect without legislation narrowing its scope, the new ABC test could impact a broad range of seasonal workers in agriculture.

**"The ABC test is a significant challenge for growers," said Michael Müller, director of government relations for the California Association of Winegrape Growers (CAWG). "If there's any work that you are contracting out for that is the principle work of the business, that worker could be an employee. That could be trucking, pest management, a variety of things."**

Miiller said the ABC test also stands in conflict with the state's unemployment insurance code.

Following the Dynamex decision last year, the California Truckers Association (CTA) filed a lawsuit alleging the ruling preempts federal law. Western States Trucking Association is also suing. Both lawsuits are ongoing, which creates sensitivities around how lawmakers and associations publicly engage with the law.

CTA has not been in full opposition to the bill, as it is seeking amendments. CAWG has joined the CTA coalition, along with ag groups representing food processors, egg farmers and almonds. The California Chamber of Commerce has led the opposition for several business groups as well. Labor groups, mainly representing construction workers, are in support of the bill.

CTA has pointed to reports by the California Employment Development Department showing that 92% of the trucking companies in California operate five or fewer trucks. These companies often begin with one owner-operator working as an independent contractor, who then builds the business by hiring other independent contractors. CTA notes that owner-operators constitute as much as 20% of the trucking industry nationwide.

CTA and assemblymembers opposing the bill have asked for an amendment to add broader exclusions for business-to-business transactions. In response, Gonzalez said, "Nothing in Dynamex or in law will prevent 1099 interactions," adding that the contractor-subcontractor relationship will not change.

Senator Brian Dahle, R-Bieber, runs a trucking business for his seed farming operation and voted against AB 5 when he was in the Assembly.

**"We harvest our crops and we need to get them out by a certain time before the weather changes," he said during arguments on the floor. "Unfortunately, I'm in the trucking business because I couldn't get trucks when I needed trucks to move my commodities."**

He pushed for a small business exemption and worried the law would apply retroactively, which is how the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit interpreted the Dynamex ruling in May.

"Under the Borello law, we assumed we were doing the right thing," said Dahle. "There are a lot of us who work tirelessly to obey the laws, and they change rapidly around here. Trying to keep up with them as a small business owner is very difficult."

**During a hearing on the bill, Gonzalez said she is committed to working with the trucking industry and does not want anyone who has invested \$100,000 into a truck to not be able to use it – a factor her office may be considering for an exemption, according to sources.** But Gonzalez cautioned the bill is "a work in progress" and it may take years to resolve the issues truckers have with the bill and with the Dynamex decision. She acknowledged this is "probably the most difficult issue" she has tried to deal with as a legislator.

"If we make exemptions for independent owner-operators, we have to be clear that we're not just providing another avenue by which companies can continue to basically prevent workers from having a sustainable life," she said.

In a letter opposing AB 5, CTA CEO Shawn Yadon notes the coalition has been seeing progress in the negotiations and he hopes to see amendments soon.

AB 5 passed its first vote on the Assembly floor along party lines, though one moderate democratic joined the 14 republicans in opposition. On Monday, Senate Appropriations placed the bill in the suspense file, adding up to three more weeks for negotiations and potential exemptions.

During that committee hearing, the Legislative Analyst's Office testified that the bill would cost the Department of Industrial Relations at least \$2.2 million initially and another \$2.1 million annually, while pulling an additional \$2.5 million from the unemployment fund as the bill is implemented. The employment department said the bill would increase its workload by 20%, at a cost of up to \$2.9 million annually. Costs to the state would likely be much higher as trade groups are expected to file a number of lawsuits if the bill passes.

The committee has until the end of August to vote on the bill. If approved, AB 5 would be subject to final votes in both the Senate and the Assembly before reaching the governor's desk. It is still to be determined how the administration views the bill. Newsom has benefited from strong support from both the tech industry and labor unions.

## **Democratic candidates tap activists, farmers for climate policy advice**

Democratic presidential candidates looking to break through in rural areas are seeking advice on farm policy from activists, farmers, economists and organizations, and those ideas are popping up on the stump, in detailed policy proposals as well as in debates.

Earlier this summer, Beto O'Rourke made a pitch for making farmers a solution to climate change. The former Texas congressman said he wanted to "capture more carbon out of the air and keep more of it in the soil, paying farmers for the environmental services that they want to provide."

**The idea had its roots in Iowa, whose caucuses kick off the presidential primary season in February.** A few days before that June debate, O'Rourke had toured a farm south of Des Moines run by Matt Russell, a fifth-generation farmer who runs a nonprofit called Iowa Interfaith Power and Light. Russell showed O'Rourke how farm practices such as longer crop rotations, conservation tillage and managed grazing could keep more carbon in the soil.

O'Rourke's one of several candidates who sought out Russell's advice after seeing a March op-ed he co-authored with radio news director Bob Leonard in The New York Times headlined "What Democrats Need to Know to Win in Rural America." O'Rourke brought up the issue of farmer carbon incentives at the first night of the initial Democratic debate, June 26.

On the second night of the debate, South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg did the same thing, and the issue also is featured prominently in a set of rural policies Buttigieg released on Tuesday.

When Elizabeth Warren's campaign was preparing a detailed farm policy plan, her team got advice from an economist at the University of Tennessee, home to a group of experts that have long advocated a return to supply management and a policy called "parity" that would guarantee farmers can cover their cost of production.



*Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass.*

Sure enough, ahead of a campaign trip through Iowa last week, Warren (shown above) included the recommendations of economist Harwood Schaffer, who has proposed raising marketing loan rates and establishing a temporary land set-aside policy, similar to the Conservation Reserve Program, to reduce production. Under his plan, the loan rate for corn would nearly double from \$2.20 to \$4 a bushel.

Picking up on the ideas promoted by Russell and another organization being tapped by the candidates, the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Warren's plan also calls for supersizing the Conservation Stewardship Program to pay farmers for carbon-conserving practices. The program, now funded at \$1 billion a year, would get \$15 billion annually under her proposal.

No other major candidate has gone so far as to promote supply management other than Sen. Bernie Sanders, who mentions it briefly in his rural policy principles. **But a common theme across the campaigns is the idea of offering farmers financial incentives to reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. It's a way of making the Green New Deal and other proposals to address climate change more palatable to rural voters.**

The Democratic front-runner, former Vice President Joe Biden, released a rural plan in July that included a proposal to "make American agriculture first in the world to achieve net-zero emissions."





Presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg visits with Focus on Rural America Chair Patty Judge at the Iowa State Fair (Photo: Delaney Howell)

**The issue could be a challenging one for Democrats to deal with in rural areas. Many farm groups have long been wary of carbon regulations that would increase energy prices and farm input costs.** Last week, after the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released a report recommended consumers shift toward plant-based meats, some Democratic candidates found themselves being questioned by reporters at the Iowa State Fair whether it was OK to eat meat.

Ohio Rep. Tim Ryan said it was an issue of "personal choice."

**"I'm eating less meat now but that's a personal choice, and I think that sharing information with people is the right way to do that," he said.**

Russell is excited to see candidates talking about paying farmers to reduce carbon emissions, calling the campaign "a great opportunity to elevate that" issue. He and his husband also run a 110-acre farm about an hour south of Des Moines where they raise fresh produce, heirloom tomato plants and grass-finished beef.

**"We're not seeing just a moment in the campaign cycle that comes and goes. We're seeing momentum,"** Russell said. **"We're inviting farmers to be leading in this and we're talking about creating the economic incentives to help them innovate to solve the problem."**

Russell hosted California Sen. Kamala Harris, who is making a major push to win Iowa's caucuses, for an hour and a half at the farm on Sunday, a day after she appeared at the Iowa State Fair. He also has talked to Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar.

Warren, meanwhile, released her rural plan last Wednesday and headed the next day to Harlan, Iowa, to a 700-acre farm run by Ron Rosmann, a prominent figure in sustainable ag circles, and his family.

On Friday night, Warren used her allotted five minutes of speaking time at the Iowa Democratic Party's Wing Ding in Clear Lake, Iowa, to talk about the rural proposals.

Rosmann also pitched her on the idea of giving farmers more financial incentives to conserve soil carbon. Among other things, he showed her a field that had been recently planted to turnips, a cover crop that will be used for grazing.

Among Rosmann's policy suggestions to her was to increase conservation compliance requirements for the federal crop insurance program, a proposal that would get significant opposition from conventional producers. "She said it was an interesting idea," he said.

**But Rosmann said he also used the opportunity to push back on parts of the Green New Deal, reducing cattle production to lower methane emissions, and the Medicare for All plan, which would eliminate private health insurance.** Eliminating cattle would make it harder for farmers to use rotational grazing to manage soil quality, and the idea of a single-payer health plan turns off rural voters, he warned her.

But all in all, he likes Warren. “I told her that most of her platform came out of the sustainable ag coalition, more or less. It sounded very similar and I’m all for it,” he said.

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition as well as the National Farmers Union have had numerous contacts from campaigns seeking advice on farm and rural policy. Candidates who have contacted NSAC staff include Biden and Sens. Sanders, Michael Bennet of Colorado and Kirsten Gillibrand of New York. NFU staffers refer the candidates to a [five-page set of policy principles](#).



*Sen. Kamala Harris flips pork chops at the Iowa State Fair.*

The two groups aren’t quite in sync on the issue of supply management. NFU supports it and also calls for raising reference prices in the Price Loss Coverage. There is no mention of increasing loan rates. PLC, unlike the marketing the loan program, is based on a farmers’ historical production.

NSAC has supported supply management in the past but has a number of concerns about it now. The group, worries for example that it could encourage more land use change in other parts of the world, potentially increasing carbon emission, and make it harder for new farmers to find acreage.

Schaffer, the Tennessee economist, told *Agri-Pulse* that he contacted several campaigns but that Warren's was the only one to show interest in a supply management plan.

## **Finance Committee looks to blunt Trump’s tariff powers**

Legislators may get their chance this fall to take back some of the authority on tariffs they gave away more than 50 years ago while also handing a rebuke to President Donald Trump.

Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley’s staff is working to combine two bipartisan bills to give Congress the power to approve or reject the president’s ability to hit foreign countries with Section 232 tariffs, which were originally designed to punish countries that threaten U.S. national security. Implicit in both bills is the mistrust of the White House to gauge what constitutes harm to national security. Grassley told reporters last week he hopes to be ready with a “compromise bill” in September or October.

**“Members of Congress feel they have a constitutionally mandated role in trade that has been minimized over time and they want to reassert themselves in the process,” says U.S. Dairy Export Council President and CEO Tom Vilsack.**

“During the height of the Cold War, Congress delegated sweeping power to the executive branch to adjust imports on the basis of national security,” Grassley said in April. “That was understandable given the era, but the benefit of time and experience has proven our Founders right in tasking Congress with authority over tariffs.”

The rush to retake that control gathered steam after Trump announced last year that steel and aluminum from China, Canada, Mexico, India, Turkey, Brazil, South Korea, Japan and the European Union were a threat to the security of the U.S. Some countries struck a quick deal to avoid the tariffs. Some, like China, did not, and retaliated with their own tariffs.

Sen. Pat Toomey, R-Pa. has support from Republicans and Democrats for his Bicameral Congressional Trade Authority Act and Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, has similar backing for his Trade Security Act. The two bills are similar, but also contain sharp differences like the fact Toomey’s legislation is retroactive. Within 75 days of enactment, it would require the Senate and House to approve all 232 tariffs levied over the past four years. If they did not, the tariffs would be repealed.



*Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa*

Both bills would require the Defense Department — instead of the Commerce Department — to perform an analysis to determine if imports represent a threat to national security.

Senators from both parties have chafed publicly at Trump’s use of the tariffs. Canada, they pointed out to Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross in a June 2018 hearing, did export steel to the U.S., but imported even more of the metal from the U.S.

Ross testified the use of the White House–directed tariffs, allowed for under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, were aimed primarily at China. China exported very little steel directly to the U.S., Ross explained, but much more arrived through third or fourth countries and often in a modified form.

But senators were not mollified as China, Mexico and Canada threatened to retaliate.

**“Recently Mexico announced it will impose tariffs of 20 percent on U.S. pork in retaliation for U.S. steel and aluminum tariffs,” former Senate Finance Committee Chair Orrin Hatch said at the hearing. “I just don’t see how the damage posed on all these sectors could possibly advance our national security.”**

It wasn’t long before all three countries did retaliate, and it was the U.S. ag sector that bore the brunt of the revenge. Mexico levied tariffs on U.S. pork, cheese, apples and potatoes. China lashed out at oranges, almonds, apples, pork, walnuts and broccoli. Canada began taxing mostly value-added products like ketchup and yogurt.

Trump, despite the alleged threats to national security, canceled the steel and aluminum tariffs on Canada and Mexico after the countries' leaders agreed to terms for the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Apple producers were some of the farmers hit the hardest and they are still suffering from retaliation to Trump's 232 tariffs, says Mark Seetin, director of industry and regulatory affairs for the U.S. Apple Association.

**“Our apple exports last year were down 27% from the prior year,” he said. “And the value of those exports was down \$240 million.”**

Mexico, India and China all hit U.S. apples in retaliation for the 232 tariffs. China levied another import tax on the fruit in response to a second wave of U.S. tariffs to punish the country for its policies to accumulate U.S. intellectual property.



*Tom Vilsack, U.S. Dairy Export Council*

“We got retaliation from all our major customers,” Seetin said. “It’s like a hammer on us.”

The dairy industry was hit hard by Mexican retaliation and is still suffering under Chinese retaliation, but yet another hammer could fall in the near future, said Vilsack, a former Obama administration ag secretary.

“From a dairy perspective, it’s a good idea for Congress to exercise oversight and to make sure that if Section 232 is used, it’s used for its proper purpose, which is to respond to genuine national security threats.” he told *Agri-Pulse*. **“We’re certainly happy that the 232 retaliation that impacted our cheese exports to Mexico was finally resolved, but we are keeping a wary eye on potential problems with Japan.”**

Japan is negotiating a free-trade agreement with the U.S., but only under the threat that the U.S. will hit Japanese cars and car parts with 232 tariffs. A few rounds of talks have already been held — the latest was in Washington last month — and if all goes well, the U.S. ag sector will benefit from increased access to one of its biggest foreign markets.

If talks don’t go well U.S. ag could lose even more of the market share in Japan, which has already cinched trade pacts with the EU and Pacific Rim countries, whose exporters now enjoy lower tariffs than U.S. competitors.

It’s a similar situation with U.S. and Chinese negotiations, Vilsack said: “It may be terrific or it may be absolute disaster. You just don’t know.”



## Trump’s often overlooked legacy: A more conservative judiciary

President Donald Trump tweets so frequently that he often dominates the daily news cycle in ways that can make even the most astute observer wonder what he’s up to. But there’s one area where he’s been focused on creating a legacy that could have impact for years to come: Selecting new, more conservative judges for federal courts.

“People have no idea how quickly he’s managed to change the judiciary,” says Michael Formica, Assistant Vice President, Domestic Affairs & Counsel for the National Pork Producers Council.

Gary Baise, a principal at OFW Law and co-head of the firm’s litigation practice, agrees.

**“Trump understands how important judges are for a common-sense approach,”** he says. “For agriculture, this means that environmentalists and some of the activist groups who like to sue because they can’t get their way in Congress or the regulatory system will lose a vital outlet.”

With the help of Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., and Judiciary Committee Chairman Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., the Senate confirmed another 13 district court judges before leaving for the August recess, bringing the total number of federal judicial appointees to 146 by Aug. 1.

Article III judicial appointments over time			
President	End of first year	End of second year	August 1 of third year
Donald Trump	19	84	146
Barack Obama	13	62	91
George W. Bush	28	100	145
Bill Clinton	28	128	156
George H.W. Bush	15	70	94
Ronald Reagan	41	87	104
Jimmy Carter	31	62	110
Gerald Ford	14	31	53
Richard Nixon	26	91	130
Lyndon Johnson	21	50	80
John Kennedy	56	111	121
Dwight Eisenhower	9	56	77
Harry Truman	18	33	46
Franklin Roosevelt	9	18	29
Herbert Hoover	18	29	49
Calvin Coolidge	0	14	32
Warren Harding	14	25	53
Woodrow Wilson	9	22	27
William Taft	10	26	47
Theodore Roosevelt	0	8	18

Source: Federal Judicial Center, courtesy of [Ballotpedia](#).

In less than three years of his first term, Trump has appointed two Supreme Court justices, 43 judges to the U.S. Court of Appeals, 99 to the U.S. District Courts and two judges to the Court of International Trade. All are lifetime appointments.

By comparison, President Barack Obama had appointed 91 federal judges and George W. Bush had appointed 145 as of Aug. 1 of the third year of their presidencies.

There are plenty more vacancies to fill at this time, including four on the U.S. Courts of Appeals, 97 on the U.S. District Courts, two on the U.S. Court of International Trade, and nine on the U.S. Court of Federal Claims, according to the U.S. Courts website.

McConnell has made it clear he's committed to filling those empty slots. **"I want you to know that my view is, there will be no vacancies left behind. None,"** McConnell said during a June speech.

One of the biggest impacts of Trump's judicial picks can be seen on the 29-member U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, based in San Francisco and home to some of the country's most liberal jurists. From pesticides to endangered species to animal welfare laws, this appeals court has historically ruled in favor of groups who have challenged agricultural interests. The court hears cases arising in nine western states, including California, Hawaii, and Oregon.

Currently, 16 of the Ninth Circuit judges have been appointed by Democrats, 12 by Republicans and one seat is vacant. Seven of those 12 judges have been nominated by Trump. Once the last vacancy is filled, Republican presidents will have picked 13 of the 29 active seats on this appellate court.

**"In three years, he has basically evened out the Ninth Circuit,"** points out Formica. **"That is something I never would have imagined in my wildest dreams."**

But just because judges are appointed by Republicans does not guarantee that decisions will be favorable to agricultural interests, says Anthony Schutz, associate professor of law at the University of Nebraska.

**"I don't think you will find ag-friendly appointees issuing ag-friendly decisions just because they are ag friendly.** While the executive's decision to pick an appointee might be political in nature, the judiciary tends to be more principled. And, often, the political choice to select a judge depends on the sense that the principles a judge exhibits will be beneficial to some political end. Sometimes that is the case, but sometimes it is not," Schutz said.

For example, consider a judge who is hostile to the notion that the judiciary should defer to agency decision-making.

"An agency that issues an ag-friendly rule on, for instance, the scope of the term 'waters of the United States' under the Clean Water Act might find itself overturned if the court disagrees with its interpretation and refuses to lend the agency any deference," Schutz added. "Such an interpretation might be beneficial to ag interests, but you will generally not find a judge allowing agency action to stand on that basis. Rather, the underlying principle of the proper amount of deference to lend an agency would play a big role in the decision."

Schutz says Trump appointees sometimes are more likely to be friendly to states' rights arguments in two kinds of commerce-clause cases.



“In the first, these judges are less likely to buy into the idea of a limitless commerce-clause doctrine. Because the regulation of agriculture is a quintessentially commerce-laden activity, it is somewhat

Court	Authorized Judgeships	Vacancies	Nominees Pending	Nominees Pending for Future Vacancies
US Court of Appeals	179	4	1	0
US District Courts (includes territorial courts*)	677	97	34	1
US Court of International Trade	9	2	0	0
US Court of Federal Claims*	16	9	4	0
US Supreme Court	9	0	0	0
Total	890	112	39	1

Source: <https://www.uscourts.gov/judges-judgeships/judicial-vacancies>

unlikely that a Trump judiciary would limit federal authority over agriculture. To do so would require the reversal of some very long-standing cases on the scope of federal power. Nearly no one predicts such a reversal.

**“So, it seems unlikely that the Trump judiciary would make significant changes to the scope of federal commerce authority over production agriculture and, certainly, over the ensuing movement of ag products on regional, national, and international scales.”**

But Schutz says there is a second type of commerce-clause case that deals with the implicit limits that the commerce clause places on states.

“Here, there is a slightly higher possibility that a Trumpian court or judiciary would be somewhat less hostile to state regulation or taxation that places a burden on agricultural commerce,” he said. “This is because, sometimes, judges in the camp that Trump would pull from are hostile to the dormant Commerce-Clause doctrine. The possibility is somewhat small, however, because there are many judges in his pool who view the doctrine as a good way of protecting the regulated community from state interference.

“But if one combines a penchant for state rights with a hostility to an active judiciary, sometimes this results in a dim view of the dormant commerce-clause doctrine,” Schutz added. “For ag, that would mean state regulation (in areas like animal welfare or the environment) would likely withstand constitutional challenge, at least in areas where the federal government has not passed legislation.”

Although Trump has repeatedly pointed to cases where he believes that federal judges have their own political agendas, Chief Justice John Roberts tried to reinforce the independence of the federal courts when he issued a rare Thanksgiving eve statement last year, rebuking some of Trump's comments.

**“We do not have Obama judges or Trump judges, Bush judges or Clinton judges. What we have is an extraordinary group of dedicated judges doing their level best to do equal right to those appearing before them,”** Roberts said.

## **NIFA grants may be delayed because of relocation, staff shortages**

The relocation of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, which gives out about \$1.7 billion a year for research and extension activities to universities, partner institutions and individual researchers, is prompting questions about whether NIFA will be able to deliver funds in a timely manner to grant recipients around the country.

NIFA employees who spoke with *Agri-Pulse* said they weren't exactly sure how many personnel remain at NIFA, but estimated the number at about 150, down from around 200 six months ago.

When asked to decide by July 15 whether they wanted to move to Kansas City, 73 employees said yes and 151 either declined or did not provide an answer. Agreements signed Friday by USDA and the American Federation of Government Employees, which represents NIFA and Economic Research Service employees, give them until Sept. 27 to make up their minds and offers the possibility of telework until Dec. 30, though USDA has said it will consider telework applications on a case-by-case basis.

**The agreement helps “in a very limited way” to maintain continuity during the grants process, said a NIFA National Program Leader who spoke with *Agri-Pulse*.**

An Agriculture Department spokesperson said, “NIFA staff intend to obligate all FY 2019 annual awards by September 30th, the end of the fiscal year. As is customary practice, final review and due diligence efforts will continue into the next fiscal year before the awarded funds are released.”

Annual awards must be obligated within one fiscal year or they go back to the Treasury, while funding for multi-year programs like the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative can be held longer before being distributed.

**The NIFA program manager, who asked not to be identified by name, agreed that funds that need to be obligated by Sept. 30, will be. But even after NIFA has deposited money in an account that can be accessed by the grantee, more steps are required before the funds can be withdrawn and spent.**

Paperwork, which can be extensive, needs to be filled out and reviewed before funds can be released. It may be as simple as checking a box saying the recipient is not a felon, or, in the case of grants requiring matching funds, validating that the organization has the funds available.

Sometimes, “there are 15 or 20 different forms that have to be signed,” the NIFA employee said.

When NIFA was fully staffed, grantees could expect to get their money within two to three months from NIFA's obligation, Now, with NIFA in the process of moving to Kansas City, the employee predicted staff shortages would extend that time to six to eight months.

Given staff disruptions, the process is moving more slowly than usual, the program manager said, and added that only “four or five” people out of what used to be 35-40 are working in NIFA's Office of Grants and Financial Management, and “nobody is going” to Kansas City from that office's Awards Management Division.

“Universities are going to get their grant money, but they’re going to get it really late,” the NIFA staffer said, pointing to the potential for problems down the road when a short-staffed NIFA cannot conduct adequate oversight of how the money is spent.

UC-Davis animal geneticist Alison Van Eenennaam told *Agri-Pulse* she did not have any inside information, but added, “There is no way they can run the competitive grants with the staff they have left. I, nor anybody applying to the competitive grants program, have any assurances.”

Amanda Crump, another UC-Davis researcher who focuses on international and domestic adult agricultural education, told *Agri-Pulse* in an email she is worried “about the long-term impacts of losing that many people. It isn’t just the scientists that are going but also the professional staff. So, the processing of awards will eventually become slower and the oversight over the projects will become difficult for the scientists to manage.”



*Amanda Crump*

Without enough personnel to ensure the money is spent according to grant conditions, “People can get up to shenanigans and never get caught,” the NIFA official said, citing as a cautionary tale former NIFA grant recipient Brian Wansink, who was director of the Cornell Food and Brand Lab and the onetime head of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans panel. Wansink was found to have committed “academic misconduct” last September and resigned officially in June.

Looking to the future, the NIFA staffer predicted delays in processing applications for about \$400 million in Agriculture Food Research Initiative grants, with application deadlines ranging from June through September, and in the \$80 million Specialty Crop Research Initiative, which has an Oct. 15 application deadline.

“We’re estimating 17 to 20 AFRI programs will be without a national program leader,” or NPL, the NIFA program leader said. NPL’s shepherd competitive grant applications through the peer review process, which includes panels “composed of peer scientists, ad hoc reviewers, and other recognized specialists in specific program areas who review applications for compliance with a program’s statutory requirements and the scientific validity of the proposed project,” according to NIFA.

**“The pipeline of funding needs to be almost a continuous process,”** said former NIFA Director Sonny Ramaswamy, now the President and CEO of Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities in Redmond, Wash. “The whole process has basically been compromised.”

Tribal colleges and universities (TCUs), which will receive about \$18 million this fiscal year, “are preparing for possible delays,” said Michael Oltrogge, president of Nebraska Indian Community College.

Asked about whether TCUs will get all their money this year, John Phillips, Tribal VISTA Programs Director of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, replied, “I feel good,” but also said he is “somewhat skeptical” about NIFA’s claims that “everything’s going to be fine.”

“We are small fish in this,” he said. “That is going, I hope, to make it easier to manage.” But their small size also means that the NIFA money is crucial to their programs, Phillips and Oltrogge noted.

Brian Engel, Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Education at Purdue’s College of Agriculture, said “there are going to be disruptions, short staff for a period. It will take time to restaff.”

NIFA says “intensive hiring efforts are currently underway ... to recruit highly qualified candidates for vacant positions,” according to its [website](#). “We are conducting a nationwide search to find people who will be dedicated to helping us fulfill our mission.” The USAJobs website [lists six job openings](#), though some appear to be for multiple positions. An ad for a grants management specialist, for example, says there are “many vacancies” in Kansas City.

USDA says it has not hired a headhunter or staffing company, but universities and interested stakeholders, such as land-grant universities, are planning job fairs and “engaged in amplifying openings.”

**“This is a part of the department’s aggressive hiring strategy to maintain the continuity of ERS and NIFA’s work and fulfill our workforce expectations in Kansas City,” a spokesperson said. “We continue to look at ways we can utilize all available resources and hiring channels.”**

## **New hemp farmers need a plan, a purchaser, and patience**

Farmers should join the enthusiasm about industrial hemp’s huge potential, ranging from medicinal uses to bioplastics, chemicals, fuels, paper and bioremediation – but proceed with caution.

That was the message prospective hemp producers heard this week at the [National Industrial Hemp Council](#) Hemp Business Summit in Portland, Ore.

Greg Ibach, USDA’s undersecretary for marketing and regulatory programs, told attendees he’s “astounded by the number of uses for the fiber” from hemp, but work remains to have the crop **be a commonplace commodity option for producers.**



*Greg Ibach, USDA*

After language to legalize hemp cultivation was included in the 2018 farm bill, Ibach has worked with USDA, FDA, EPA, Treasury, USTR, Commerce and Justice Department agencies on writing rules and regulations needed for full implementation. He expects the new regulatory framework to be “in place this fall” to address issues including lab testing requirements, farm

inspections, and the “destruction process” for any hemp crop that tests above the 0.3 percent THC limit.

To help farmers manage their risks with growing hemp, Ibach said USDA is focused on writing regulations that provide growers with a full range of USDA support including crop insurance and funding from USDA’s rural development programs. He also stressed that the new regulations are being published as an interim final rule to provide USDA the flexibility to work with farmers and processors on making any needed changes.

American Farm Bureau Federation lobbyist Scott Bennett congratulated the gung-ho attendees at the sold-out meeting for their interest in accelerating hemp production, processing and market development. But he said it’s also time to “pump the brakes.”

“This hemp industry has a lot of potential in the United States as an alternative for some farmers and a future for some new and emerging farmers,” he said in an interview with *Agri-Pulse*. **But he warned that “you’re not going to become rich overnight growing hemp.”**

Ibach said USDA has also identified marketing and processing issues as potential hurdles for the hemp industry, and “farmers need to be wise about looking for a contract to grow their hemp with and be careful about how they invest their money.”

A number of factors on all levels could play into a hemp producer’s success, including the language USDA is set to release in an interim final rule Bennett expects to see in the next month or so. As for individual producers, he said farmers should have a contract in line to purchase their hemp before putting a single seed in the ground and see where processing will take place.

“That will determine where growing hemp will be profitable,” he said.

**Farm Bureau Economist Michael Nepveux similarly sees great potential for hemp. But he added his own cautions about serious challenges. He warned about the need to boost the farm labor supply, provide a full range of risk management tools, and develop new markets to avoid creating “a huge oversupply of hemp in the U.S.”**

Vote Hemp President Eric Steenstra, a veteran hemp advocate, called for national standards to replace the hurdles posed by the patchwork of different state regulations on hemp.

Steenstra sees an urgent need for the data collection that Vote Hemp has done “because no one else was doing it.” He says hemp plantings remain unknown, but Vote Hemp has gone to every state Department of Agriculture for figures on licensing.

The results show a crop growing in popularity, but still a sliver of America’s overall crop production. In 2018, 112,000 acres were licensed for hemp production. In 2019, the number shot up to 480,000 acres, with Colorado and Oregon leading the way with 80,000 and 60,000 acres, respectively. Not all licensed acres are expected to be planted, Steenstra noted.



*L to R: Steenstra, Nepveux, and Bennett address hemp summit*

While sowing four times the acreage year-over-year represents a significant jump, it still would account for only 9% of the nation's projected 2019 acres for sorghum, the nation's fifth-largest crop. It would be an even more minuscule half a percent of the nation's projected corn plantings.

**“We just want to see people start small” and recognize that “there’s a learning curve” for practices that include seed selection, pest management and crop rotations, Steenstra said.** “I do think there are going to be a lot of farmers this year that are trying it for the first time that may not have success because they jumped into it a little too quickly.”

Food and Drug Administration Principal Associate Commissioner for Policy, Food and Drug Administration Lowell Schiller told the summit that hemp-derived cannabidiol (CBD) offers “significant public health benefits” and has sparked “an enormous amount of agricultural interest.” But he also noted that approving CBD and other uses poses potential public health risks. He said that in weighing risks and benefits, FDA is moving as rapidly as possible but needs to be cautious because there’s “too much we still don’t know about CBD” such as cumulative exposure risks and long-term effects.

Schiller called on the hemp industry itself to help provide the data needed to write rules for CBD and other hemp products. He also said that once FDA compiles the needed data, it may ask Congress for new authority to accelerate the rule-making process.

In his comments at the summit Tuesday Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., focused on another issue – financing. He called on the industry to support his new push for a legislative fix, as proposed in his proposed Secure and Fair Enforcement (SAFE) Banking Act. He said it’s past time for removing banking and other hurdles facing hemp, to spur development of “a new frontier in agriculture.” Other speakers focused on a common theme: the more than half-century ban on growing hemp has created a shortage of the ingredients needed for rapidly turning hemp into a major U.S. crop.

National Industrial Hemp Council Board Chair Patrick Atagi sees the NIHC addressing the shortage by creating a new source of information, education, alliances and partnerships. He told *Agri-Pulse* the fact that this week’s hemp summit was sold out “validated that we’re on the right course, we’re providing the right information.”

**With the farm sector under pressure and farmers going out of business, Atagi said “there’s a desperation out there” driving interest in hemp “where you need caution too.” He says the NIHC offers one answer: “the education we’re providing here today.”**

He explained some failures with hemp have been due to “planting the wrong variety of seed in the wrong place” – a costly mistake for hemp which requires different seeds for different end products, different microclimates, different spacing and even for slight differences in elevation or planting times. What’s most important, Atagi explains, is a long-term, market-oriented approach to advancing the hemp industry. “For the viability of hemp, we really need to be thinking of the long term.”



## News Briefs:

**Fight over raising Shasta Dam escalates.** Siding with environmental groups, Attorney General Xavier Becerra has pushed back on an effort to raise Shasta Dam, going against a project supported by Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., a friend of the administration, as well as President Barack Obama. Raising the dam by 18 feet is estimated to deliver an additional project 80,000 acre-feet of storage at a cost of \$1.4 billion, which would be benefit and be paid in part by the large Westlands Water District. Feinstein worked with House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Bakersfield, to author a bill in 2016 that last year provided \$20 million to the Shasta Dam project.

Becerra in May asked for a preliminary injunction to block Westlands from performing an environmental impact review on the project, claiming the district is a state entity interfering with a federal project and it would violate environmental protection laws. A Shasta County judge in July agreed to halt the study.

In a statement issued earlier this week, Westlands countered that Becerra had agreed to a study “in the abstract,” rather than the standard public review process, and that no state agency has found the river would incur negative environmental impacts from the project. “The Attorney General obtained this injunction against Westlands for the express purpose of excluding the public and other agencies from the District’s analytical process,” said Westlands General Manager Tom Birmingham. “In more than 35 years of experience working on issues related to CEQA, I am unaware of any court ever enjoining the preparation of an environmental impact report.”

**Avocados research could minimize browning.** A professor at Purdue University has received a grant to research the avocado and characteristics to maintain and prolong its longevity. A professor of biological sciences at Purdue University, Michael Gribskoc, received the Fullbright Scholar Award. This award will allow him to conduct research on the avocado, focusing on analyzing the transcriptome of the DNA, that could allow for the ability to “manipulate the firmness of the fruit and the rate at which they ripen,” says a [release by Purdue University](#). Currently 80% of avocados consumed in the U.S. are imported from Mexico, with the rest being grown primarily in California. This market could grow if the longevity of an avocado was manipulated and allowed for markets to expand. The study will be conducted at the [Universidad Nacional de Columbia in Bogotá](#), allowing Gribskov to focus on a wide variety of avocados, and not the Hass variety typically seen in American stores. These other varieties range in size, shape and appearance, causing skepticism among most American consumers who prefer consistency in their food, but these varieties are giving the study an added factor to examine. “Because the varieties in Colombia are so diverse, they probably have a lot of different oils,” Gribskov said. “That affects their taste, but it also affects what kind of different commercial products they could be used in.” Gribskov will be leaving for Columbia in early 2020, to begin this research.

**Virulent Newcastle inching toward eradication.** A disease that caused the depopulation of more than 1 million California birds looks to be on the decline. [According to USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service](#), the last confirmed case of the disease was a June 4 detection in Riverside County, the 448<sup>th</sup> such premises in California to have a reported

outbreak. Infections have primarily been in the Los Angeles area and in surrounding counties. Single detections were also reported in Utah and Arizona. According to a report from the American Veterinary Medical Association, four commercial flocks made up around 820,000 of the approximately 1.2 million birds depopulated because of the disease. The rest were primarily from small backyard flocks described by APHIS as “exhibition chickens.”

The disease spreads through feces, feathers, respiratory secretions, and materials like clothing. According to AVMA, the virus has a 21-day life cycle, and “once APHIS officials determine the virus likely has been eradicated, they plan for at least two rounds of surveillance testing on 21-day cycles.” APHIS says the disease poses no food safety concern and no human cases have ever occurred from eating poultry products. Cases of human infection from those working directly with affected birds are rare and can be “easily” prevented with personal protective equipment.

## **Farm Hands: Conway appointed to California Farm Service Agency**

Secretary of Agriculture **Sonny Perdue** swore into office **Scott Soles** to serve as USDA’s principal deputy chief financial officer. Soles grew up in Oxnard, California and graduated with a degree in accounting from Southwest Texas State University. Soles is a CPA and has a Certification in Financial Forensics. He brings over 30 years of experience in internal and external financial auditing, consulting, and finance operations. Most recently, Soles was a senior financial projects analyst residing with his family in Houston, Texas.

USDA has appointed **Connie Conway** to serve as the new State Executive Director (SED) for the USDA Farm Service Agency in California. Prior to her appointment, Conway ran her own consulting business that focused on strategic planning, business development, and government relations services. She also served as an assemblywoman for the California State Legislature where she served as Minority Leader and on the Agriculture, Transportation, Labor and Health Committees.

Governor **Gavin Newsom** made three appointments on Tuesday, August 13. **Teresa Alvarado** of San Jose, has been appointed to the California Water Commission. Alvarado has been San Jose director of SPUR since 2016 and was deputy administrative officer for the Santa Clara Valley Water District from 2011 to 2016. **Matthew Swanson** of Turlock, has also been appointed to the California Water Commission. Swanson has been president and chief executive officer at Associated Feed since 1998. **Phil Ginsburg** of San Francisco, has been appointed to the California State Park and Recreation Commission. He has been general manager of the San Francisco recreation and park department since 2009 and was chief of staff in the Office of San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom from 2006 to 2008.

The California Fresh Fruit Association (CFFA) has hired **Courtney Razor** as its new director of member services and communications. She previously served as the chief operations officer for the Fresno County Farm Bureau for the last six and a half years. At Farm Bureau, Razor managed their Future Advocates for Agriculture Concerned about Tomorrow (FAACT) program, supported the needs of the board of directors and executive committee and oversaw special event planning. Her first day at the Association will be Tuesday, September 3.

**Chrisandra Flores** has been appointed by the Board of Supervisors of Sacramento County to serve as the agricultural commissioner and sealer of weights and measures, effective August 18.

Flores obtained her Commissioner License and Sealer License in November of 2013 and was appointed to the position in Nevada County in December 2014. After serving the Nevada County Agriculture Industry and residents for two years and helping to secure agri-tourism in the County, she made her way to Sacramento County.

**Cassie Howard** has been promoted to the director of category management for Sunkist Growers. In this role, Howard will analyze industry data to help Sunkist partners make better business decisions that grow its citrus categories.

Canadian ambassador to the U.S., **David MacNaughton**, announced he will step down as ambassador at the end of August and return home to Toronto to start a new position in the private sector. MacNaughton has been the ambassador since March of 2016, and has worked on USMCA trade negotiations. Canada's deputy U.S. ambassador, **Kirsten Hillman**, will become the acting ambassador.

Yum Brands has promoted **David Gibbs** to take the helm of the company as the new CEO. He will succeed **Greg Creed**, who has served as CEO since 2015 and will retire at the end of 2019. Yum Brands is the company behind the restaurant chains KFC, Pizza Hut and Taco Bell. Gibbs currently serves as the president and operating chief overseeing the three main divisions. He has been with the company for more than 30 years and held various leadership roles in all of Yum's brands.

**Bob Freeman** joins the staff of JJB Farms as the new director of sales for Onions Etc. and Modi Apple USA divisions. Freeman brings over 18 years of experience managing produce accounts and retail and wholesale clients. Prior to coming to JJB Farms, he worked at Fresh Express, Yorkshire Foods (Del Monte Dried Fruit), Mariani Packing, and Fresh Gourmet.

**Philip Rossetti** is the new fellow on the minority staff of the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis. He will be focusing on energy and climate policy. Prior to joining the committee, he served as the director of energy policy at the American Action Forum.

**Andrew Noh** is Rep. **Harley Rouda's**, D-Calif., new chief of staff and covers the portfolio for labor and employment and appropriations. He previously served as the deputy chief of staff and legislative director... **Zac Commins** is now Rouda's legislative director covering the portfolio for immigration. He previously served as the senior legislative assistant... **Matt Jackson** has been promoted to legislative assistant from legislative correspondent for Rouda. He covers the portfolio for foreign trade and international affairs... **Beth Hammon** is now a policy adviser for Rouda covering energy, environmental protection, science and technology, and public lands and natural resources issues. She previously served on Rouda's staff for the Environment Subcommittee for the House Oversight and Reform Committee as a professional staff member.

**Sonali Desai** is the new chief of staff for Rep. **Judy Chu**, D-Calif. She replaces **Linda Shim**, who has left the office. Desai previously served as the legislative director for Chu. She covers the portfolio for small business and commerce. **Ellen Hamilton** takes over as Chu's legislative director covering transportation and health issues. She previously served as the senior legislative assistant.

**Allison Johnson** has been hired as the new legislative assistant for Rep. **Mark DeSaulnier**, D-Calif., covering the transportation and infrastructure portfolio. She comes to DeSaulnier's office from Hogan Lovells US LLP where she served as an associate.

**Leah Courtney** is now the communications director for Rep. **Ross Spano**, R-Fla. She comes from Tallahassee, Fla., where she served as the communications coordinator at Florida TaxWatch.

The Foundation for Food and Agriculture announced the second cohort of FFAR Fellows, which is a three-year fellowship working to engage 17 doctoral candidates to prepare them to become the next generation of scientists in food and agriculture. The following students to comprise the 2019 FFAR Fellow cohort are as follows: **Alex Batson**, Washington State University; **Scott Cosseboom**, University of Maryland; **Maria Gannett**, Cornell University; **Natalie Goh**, University of California-Berkeley; **Sihui Ni**, North Carolina State University; **Nate Korth**, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; **Miriam Martin**, Kansas State University; **Kelsey Peterson**, University of Minnesota; **Linda Beckett**, Purdue University; **Gwen Donley**, Case Western Reserve University; **Karlinton Flores**, North Carolina State University; **Danielle Gelardi**, University of California-Davis; **Annemarie Krug**, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; **Krista Marshall**, University of California-Davis; **Dhruv Patel**, University of California-Berkeley; **Inocent Ritte**, Tuskegee University; **Danielle Stevenson**, University of California-Riverside.

**Best regards,**

**Sara Wyant**

**Editor**

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