

**Mike Metzger-#13**  
**TALL XII- Session 4**  
**Washington, D.C., Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York**  
**April 30-May 8, 2011**

**Saturday and Sunday, April 30<sup>th</sup> and May 1<sup>st</sup>.**

I flew out of Lubbock early Saturday morning with some of my other classmates to meet up with the rest of our group in Houston and then fly to Washington D.C. I have never been to any of the states we were visiting on this tour and I was very excited about this trip. Saturday night we had the "Washington After Dark" tour. Our tour guide was excellent and full of historical information. I felt very proud of our culture and how this country got its roots and why we are still the best in the world. From all of the war memorials, to seeing the White House, Jefferson and Lincoln memorials and much more, I will always remember this experience.

On Sunday we walked our feet off and took in the sights of the city. I have never seen so many police officers and taxi cabs in one place. Another first for me was riding the subway. It was a good experience, but I still prefer my pickup and open roads I travel in Texas.

**Monday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**U.S. Secretary of Agriculture**

We arrived at the USDA, Jamie L. Whitten Building and Kathryn Hill from the Office of Communication greeted us. The leadership program from Arizona, Project Central, were also in attendance and we all met each other. Our speaker was Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack. While we were waiting on him, we saw a short segment about the USDA, which has 100,000 employees in 7 locations around the world. Some of their duties are to oversee National Parks and school lunch programs. Another interesting fact is that only 2% of Americans are in farming. Mr. Vilsack did arrive in strong fashion with at least 2 CIA or bodyguard types with him, which I later learned is normal. He seemed very direct and pre-occupied, but it was understandable as the day before, Osama Bin Laden had been killed by the U.S. Navy Seals and the natural disasters of floods and tornadoes have been weighing heavily on him. He spoke of his tours of some of the towns hit by tornadoes and how devastating the damage was. Questions were asked about some of the things EPA are looking at implementing and the next Farm Bill. I appreciated his time to come talk to us but do not necessarily think that some of the information he gave in response to some of our questions was what many in our group thought was correct, which is fine because it is a free country and we are all allowed our own opinions! Mr. Vilsack spoke of the importance of agriculture and how important it is to our country. Rural people make up 44% of our military and 30% of our farmers are over the age of 65 with 57% decline in population in rural America. It is important for us to come up with ways to keep rural America vibrant so we can keep jobs here and not depend on foreign countries to provide our food and fiber.

**Environment & Green House Gases**

Mary Ann Rozum from the National Institute for Food and Agriculture Research visited with us about the research they are doing to study more drought tolerant crops. She stated that they are seeing much more volatility in the weather patterns and due to man's manipulation of forests, land,

etc, that we have more carbon monoxide in the air. This helps weeds grow better and harder for us to control. Their job is to look at ways for us to grow food and fiber better with more output based on today's climate. They even use crop models and study them in 15 minute increments all in an effort to develop better producing plants.

### **Michael Scuse, Acting Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services**

Mr. Scuse gave us an overview of the 3 agencies under him which are FSA, RMA and Foreign Agriculture Service. FSA is the one I as an ag lender is the most familiar with as many farmers use them as a source of credit for farm operating and farm ownership loans. FSA have over 2241 offices and will loan out around \$5 billion this year.

### **Overview of SNAP Program**

Jessica Shahin with the Food and Nutrition Service discussed the Supplemental Nutrition Program that started in the 1930's. Texas calls it the Lone Star Card. Purpose of this program is to provide food for those without the income to purchase it. SNAP serves 1 in 7 people in the U.S. and is paid for 100% by the federal government. In every \$5 spent by SNAP, \$9 is generated through the economy.

### **U.S. Agricultural Exports: Is the Sky the Limit?**

Dr. Sherry Wise, Chief Economist of Livestock & Seed programs with Agricultural Marketing Service gave an overview of the commodity markets showing us both the past and projected trends for various commodities such as dairy, fruits and vegetables, livestock and seed, poultry, cotton and tobacco. With the world population increasing, natural disasters here in the U.S. and a weak dollar, our commodities are in high demand. Developing countries are striving to produce more of their own food and clothing but that will take some time and in meantime, we have the resources and efficiency to produce more than we use so exports should continue to be good for us for a number of years.

### **Retail: Bridging the Gap Between Producers and Consumers**

Tres Bailey was the sponsor of our lunch and is the Director of Agriculture with Wal-Mart Inc. He said that Wal-Mart is focusing on partnering with those in the supply chain and looking for environmental stability so as to lessen the impact of the production of products for consumers and the environment. It sounds like Wal-Mart is doing a good thing with their profits by partnering with even other companies such as Best Buy and Target to see how we can maybe reduce the effect to our environment from the production and delivery of goods and services.

### **An Inside Look into Washington D.C.**

Dustin Bryant visited with us during our lunch and discussed how he works to help Texas A&M. He works as an associate for Meyers & Associates and is the eyes and ears for the University in D.C. and by being in D.C. he can promote A&M and educate. This process can be beneficial through research projects awarded to the college.

### **How AFBF Works as a National Organization**

We joined up with the Arizona Project Central group again and heard Mark Maslyn, Executive Director of Public Policy for American Farm Bureau Federation. Mr. Maslyn stated how well Farm

Bureau is known and recognized across the state and credited the local offices for this. The AFBF informs and educates our politicians on issues important to their members, which is about 6 million of them today.

Kellis Lundlum of AFBF as director of Regulatory Relations discussed animal welfare and how animal rights activists are pushing for minimal space requirements for pork and chicken and the use of antibiotics on animals. No studies have proven that the use of antibiotics in animals is related to resistance in humans.

Paul Schlegel, a chief economist with AFBF, discussed immigration and the challenges we face in finding labor to work, such as at dairies. With many U.S. people not wanting to work certain jobs, farmers need solutions on how they can legally hire those from outside the country that want to work. He stated that about 53% of farm workers are illegal.

Dave Salmonsens is the Senior Director of Congressional Relations with AFBF and how “Trade” is going or not going with some countries. Trade issues are a full time discussion as it is very important to our people in the U.S. and especially our farmers. We are very close to a new trade agreement with Mexico.

### **Welcome and Overview of the President’s Rural Agenda**

Doug McKalip is the Senior Policy Advisor for Rural Affairs. We meet with him in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building which is right next to the White House. The room we were in is where many TV interviews are. Mr. McKalip is part of the Presidents Executive office and he spent 17 years with USDA. Part of his role is to communicate to the Administration what is important and needed for rural America to stay vibrant and a continued economic force in our country. I may be wrong, but I picture Mr. McKalip as the eyes and ears of rural America and he uses this to promote this important part of our nation.

### **Outline of the President’s Energy Agenda Programs**

Dan Utech as Deputy Director of Energy and Climate Change Policy spoke briefly about our energy situation in America and things we want to do. Some examples are to reduce oil imports by 1/3 by 2025, increase domestic oil production, use more bio fuels and new technologies in that industry, and find more ways to power Americans which will give us all more choices.

### **Overview of Let’s Move and Healthy Nutrition Initiatives**

The Executive Director of Let’s Move, Robin Schepper visited with us about getting in shape and educating our citizens of the importance of eating right and staying fit. Mrs. Obama is a strong advocate of this program and Mrs. Schepper works with her often, helping kids across the country to get out and move. She stated that about 1.3 million kids are overweight and how 30 years ago we ate 15 lbs less sugar a year. Good health helps with better grades in school, self esteem, economic growth, national security and the cost on our medical system.

### **Administration Initiatives on Immigration Issues**

Senior Advisor on Immigration Policy, Felicia Escobar, discussed how immigration reform is a hot topic for the administration. This policy is important to many farmers as mentioned above, both as a

source of labor and depending on what border state you live in, as a source of criminal activity on the farms and ranches the illegals are coming across on. I know there is not a cut and dry answer on how we need to deal with this, but with both the U.S. and most states inside this country very broke, the burden is becoming too much for us to bear.

We finished our first day in D.C. with a dinner at Capitol City Brewing Station and Former Congressman Charlie Stenholm. Stenholm is now a lobbyist and I sure appreciated his candor during his talk with us. If he believes in something, he will tell you and work hard to support it and get others to do the same. I really enjoyed hearing about some of his past experiences in his career and I really appreciate and respect him for all he has done.

**Tuesday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>**

### **India Embassy**

We began our second day by visiting the India Embassy. It is located in a beautiful old house and was purchased by India in 1946. Minister Vinae Quatra provided information about India's continued growth in population, trade, infrastructure and technology. India is an agricultural society and ag employs 55% of their people and makes up 15% of their GDP or 1.5 trillion. Today their manufacturing and service sectors are growing much more than agriculture is. The U.S. and India have a very good relationship when it comes to trade and commerce. We both share a lot of our people and expertise with each other. India has a vast pool of technical and scientific manpower. The middle class population in India is more than the entire population of the U.S. This has put pressure on the demand for food and clothing worldwide along with China's thirst for goods and services. Some of India's weaknesses are a lack of storage for their commodities and a weak infrastructure to move their goods and services. The Minister stated they are investing heavily in these areas to improve them. India is the second fastest growing economy behind China. I found it interesting that only rice and wheat, their two main food crops are the only crops that they have food security! Also, fish and spices are their commodities they export the most to the U.S.

### **Current Issues Facing the Congress and Important Agriculture Issues**

Senator John Cornyn from Texas started off discussing the happiness of many in D.C. of the demise of Osama Bin Laden. He then discussed the three things the Senate is focusing on at this time, which is jobs, spending, and the national debt. He said 40% of every dollar is borrowed and that the Chinese hold one trillion of it. Plus the 38 billion of proposed cuts is not nearly enough when we are spending three trillion and only two trillion is coming in. Senator Cornyn also mentioned that they are working to reduce the power of the EPA as they are making it harder for people to create new business and industry and to stay in business. The best method is to cut funding to the EPA.

### **Markets, Imports/Exports, Production US/World, Domestic and Foreign Policy**

Thomas Dorr and Floy Gaibler, President and Director of Trade Policy for the U.S. Grains Council said their mission is to develop markets and enable trade. This Council began in Texas 50 years ago with the sorghum and corn producers. With China and India's huge population growth and the fact that both of them are focusing more on other industries besides agriculture, we have a great future for continued exports of our grain products. We are much more efficient and grow more bushels per acre than either of these countries, but they stated that China and India's trade policies favor self sufficiency, but as of now, neither country can't produce enough of their own food. The Council is

constantly working on trade policy with both countries so we can have a bigger piece of the pie and provide more of a safety net to our producers.

### **New Farm Bill and Current Issues facing U.S. Agriculture**

Congressman Frank Lucas from Oklahoma and Chairman of the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture was a great speaker. I appreciated his comments and what seemed to me a down to earth person with a real work ethic. He said that we definitely have challenges ahead for the next farm bill. Out of 46 members, 23 of them are new, with 26 being Republicans and of that, 16 are new to Washington, and educating them about farm policy is important. (1/2 of ag committee will be rookies for this new farm bill.) With budgets tight and record high commodity prices, he stated he does not have any insight he can give on the farm bill today, but they will wait until about a year before the farm bill is up and begin their discussions.

### **Current Agricultural Issues and the New Farm Bill**

Mike Conaway, Congressman from Texas for the 11<sup>th</sup> Congressional District reiterated that we have some big challenges on passing a sound farm bill.

### **Restoring America's Promise for Future Generations**

Congressman Bill Flores from the 17<sup>th</sup> District of Texas has only a few months under his belt as he was just elected to office. Numerous questions were asked by our class that he was not able to answer, but I appreciated him telling us that he did not know enough to comment on some of these instead of acting as he did. Congressman Flores would like to keep estate taxes at today's levels and not increase them and wants to decrease the power the EPA has. Also, our country does not have a long term energy policy and he believes we need to put one in place soon. The DOE was formed 30 years ago and at that time we imported 30% of our oil. Today we import 60% of it. He said they are currently working on a Bill to change what the Obama administration did, which was to reduce drilling for oil.

### **Homeland Security/Border Issues and Immigration**

Immigration is definitely a hot topic and at this point in our trip, at least the third time we have discussed it. Congressman Henry Cuellar of the 28<sup>th</sup> District of Texas did not have much time to visit with us as he was on his way to go place his vote to not repeal Obama's health care plan. He believes that we need to use technology and not a fence to limit access and to work to get those immigrants that are not criminals legal so they can work in the U.S. under rules and laws. With a guest worker program, it would reduce the number of illegals trying to sneak into the U.S.

We finished up our day with an evening at Ford's Theater to see "Liberty Smith". I was able to see the actual coat that Abraham Lincoln wore the night he was assassinated at the theater. Just another example of the great history we can all see and enjoy in our country.

**Wednesday, May 4<sup>th</sup>**

### **Bonita Farms**

We arrived in Darlington, Maryland and Billy Boniface, one of the sons and an owner of this thoroughbred horse training facility discussed the business and lack of it. With the economy, his business has taken a hit, but they continued to be optimistic. This 400 acre farm even has a 5/8 of a mile dirt tract to train on. To diversify their income, they began growing grapes and Christmas trees. A beautiful place and he and his siblings all live on the farm.

### **Waffle Hill Farm**

We loaded the bus and drove a short distance to Waffle Hill Farm. Ned Sayre, the owner, discussed his 300 acre farm that began in 1960. They run Black Angus and run about 60 head today. They also have diversified by filling a niche market of selling some of their beef directly to the consumers. This began in 2001 and their customers don't mind paying a little more for the product. The business is Deer Creek Beef and he slaughters about 30-40 head per year for direct sales and have other producers in this business that do the same. I realized that unlike the farmers I deal with in the Texas Panhandle, many of the producers we visited with during the week are not farming only, but marketing and selling products they grow or make directly to the customer.

### **Brooms Bloom Dairy**

When our bus arrived, it was a little damp and cold and I was hungry. We enjoyed some great soup and ice cream at this family owned restaurant that sits on their dairy farm. Mrs. Kate Dallam and her husband run the operation and the farm has been in the family since 1726 and 9 generations. They opened the restaurant 6 ½ years ago and run about 53 cows. Her husband takes care of the dairy, where they sell the milk to a local coop. About 10% of the milk is used for cheese. Further diversity in their income can be seen at the top of the silos' where there are numerous cell phone towers!

After the tour, we learned that our bus had a flat so we were a little late in getting to our next engagement in Leola, PA. The Project Central group from Arizona was already there and we had a very nice meal with them and heard Russell Redding, Dean of Ag from Delaware Valley College speak. I was very tired and retired to a fabulous room that I wish I could have stayed in for more than one night!

**Thursday, May 5<sup>th</sup>**

### **Amish Farm Tour**

One of the most interesting stops for me was of the Amish dairy farm. Mr. Sam Riehl and his wife Susie were very gracious and had a beautiful place. Everything was so green and clean and neat. They had around 30 cows and grew all of their own food for them. They also have diversified their income stream with a small store right behind their house that sold quilts, pillows, jelly and many other items. If I heard Mr. Riehl correctly, this store does pretty well in providing income to the family. I learned what was fact and fiction with the Amish and why they don't drive cars or have electric lines running to their property. Quite simply he said it was just their way of preserving a culture and a way of life. They have their own private schools for their kids, yet still pay taxes to

fund public education. Their schools receive no federal money. The Amish are in all types of industry from carpentry and concrete and furniture and many more. About 40% of the Amish are in farming and they do not use motorized tractors but mules to get their work done. This is a regular way of life for them, but for us outsiders, very different, which is OK.

### **Produce Auction**

Our next stop was a produce auction that a few investors started in the early 1980's and the first of its kind. It has sales estimated at 10 million dollars per year and most of the flowers, trees, fruits and vegetables are grown by local people that can make some good money at it. These growers have places of 2-50 acres and everything sold here is at wholesale. We arrived in time to see an auctioneer at work, going from pallet to pallet selling off flowers. There are not any chain buyers here, but instead local grocery stores and roadside stands and markets purchasing. The sellers pay an 8% commission and yes, competition has since come along with other auctions in the area doing the same thing.

We arrived back where we had stayed the night and had lunch and Lenwood Sloan, the Film Commissioner for Pennsylvania and J.D. Dunbar of Penn State University spoke to us. J.D. was in the Rural-Urban Leadership Program called RULE and she did an excellent job of welcoming us while we were in town and arranging our speakers and tours. We left for New York City and checked into a nice hotel right on Times Square. Wow, lots of people for this boy!

### **Friday, May 6<sup>th</sup>**

Larry Van De Valk, Executive Director of LEAD from New York joined us on our bus to begin our day. He was very informative and I learned that the state of N.Y. has much more agriculture than I thought. Dairy is 50% of their ag receipts and 75% of the land is private ownership, compared to Texas at 97%. Their tax burden is much higher than ours and access to land to farm or purchase for farming is a challenge. Their farmers also have a hard time finding people willing to work and it is getting tougher for them to hire illegals without getting fined for it. Unlike Texas, they get about 40" of rain a year in upstate areas and have a great climate for production. Another benefit they have is the Great Lakes. New York does not have a water shortage problem and their watershed protection plan gives them some of the cleanest water in the U.S.

### **Mosner Veal & Lamb**

Ben, Jessica and Seth Mosner greeted us at this meat packing operation that has been in business since 1957 and started by their grandfather. Jessica took us on a tour and I could tell she definitely knows her business and is enthusiastic about what she does. This 35,000 square foot facility is inspected by USDA at least 2 times per day. Most of their beef and lamb goes to local restaurants where Mosner has a great reputation for having an excellent product. They sell both packaged meats and hung and being in this part of the U.S., the labor is union. Her father and uncle are still very active in this family business and I am sure that their continued pride and reputation in what they do is why they have the same customers buying from them year after year.

## **Hunts Point Producer Terminal**

We arrived at the largest food distribution center in the world that was started in 1967 and has 10,000 employees. It is a public and private ownership structure and 43 owners of this coop. There are about 3 miles of loading docks with different businesses selling all kinds of fruits and vegetables and 18 miles of rail. I guess you need all of this space when you are providing food for over 20,000 restaurants in New York. By the time we had arrived, the rush was gone, but we were told that early in the morning the place is very busy with buyers scrambling to get the product they want to sell in their market. Many of the tenants are 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generation and 60% of the sales are cash sales. This facility represents fifty five foreign countries and 49 states. We met with Myra Gordon, Executive Director of Hunts Point and the lady that runs this big ship! She seems to love what she does with a passion. The important business at hand right now she said was deciding on whether or not they will continue to operate in the current facility or move over to New Jersey. Their lease is due now on the current facility at \$5.4 million to the city of New York and their total budget is \$18 million dollars and she said the board has been working very hard to determine what is in the best interest of both the tenants and the customers. Something else that I learned is that mango is the world's number one fruit whereas the banana is number one in the U.S. Apple and oranges are next in order.

## **Community Kitchen and Food Pantry**

We arrived in Harlem and Daryl Foriest greeted us with a big smile. Even though the serving line did not open until 4pm, there were many people waiting there until it did open for a meal. It sure puts things in perspective and you realize how good we have it when we eat 3 good meals a day. I applaud Daryl and his staff for the work they do and hope they provide for the people they serve.

## **How the capital markets fund agriculture through the Farm Credit System**

Doug Williams, managing director, described what the FCS does and how it is funded. The FCS was started in 1916 to provide Americans a source of credit for rural land, farm operating, equipment, agri-business, rural home loans and more. As a loan officer with the FCS, I was aware of how we get our funding to provide money to our customers. I really appreciated Mr. Williams presentation in that I thought he did a great job of explaining to our class when the FCS started, the types of loans that make up our portfolio, the quality of our portfolio even after the hard economic times we just went through, and what sets us apart from commercial banks for long term funding, which is the selling of bonds.

## **U.S. Economic Conditions**

Norman Gertner is a regional economist for FDIC in New York City. I must say he was the most enthusiastic economist I had ever heard because most of mine in college were very boring. Mr. Gertner stated he thinks we will have a 20% growth in GDP next year and many people will be hired back in the next 12 months that lost their jobs over the last few years. The housing market is still not very strong, but values are improving, yet he thinks we may have another setback in this market. It may take 8-10 years before housing goes back up. If I understood him correctly, high oil prices are actually keeping inflation in check and therefore interest rates low because when goods and services we buy are higher due to the increase in oil prices, we as consumers don't buy/demand as much.

**Saturday, May 7<sup>th</sup>**

### **Martin Nop Dairy**

This 275 head dairy in Orange County, New York is truly a family farm. The Nops live on 270 acres and have a beautiful place. Mr. Nop raises his own replacements. Some of his challenges he faces is having enough land spreading the manure from the dairy. He does have neighbors that very rarely have any complaints about the “smell” of the operation, but he said finding land for sale that farmers can afford is tough. With urban influence on land, some of the land around him has gone for \$10,000 per acre, which is not affordable for a farmer. They sell their milk through their local co-op and today it is about \$20.

### **Rogowski Farm-Pine Island NY**

We stopped to tour some of the richest soil in America, muck soil. I had never heard of it until this trip and I never saw soil this color. It is very dark and has a large amount of organic material in it from old forests that many years ago, trees fell down and decayed. This soil is 18-30” deep and has water underneath it all the time. When you jump on it, the person next to you can feel the ground move. They grow vegetables on it such as radishes, spinach, lettuce and more. We were in the largest continuous patch of muck soil in the U.S. It is made up of 40% organic matter and what was really interesting is the soil can catch on fire! Mr. Rogowski treated us to a polish lunch and the State of New York Commissioner of Agriculture, Darryl Aubertine spoke with us. The hospitality of everyone was incredible and I will always remember the “muck soil” tour.

### **DeBucks Sod Farm**

Leonard DeBucks sod farm was a sight to see. His Dad was in this business many years ago and encouraged Leonard to go into it and they have been growing sod for 30 years. This was the largest patch of Kentucky bluegrass I had ever seen and they demonstrated how they harvest it. He typically seeds it in mid August and plants 30lbs/acre and it is ready to harvest in about 18-20 months. Just like most of the other farmers we saw on this trip, Mr. DeBucks also has diversified by investing in a golf course.

### **Pennings Orchards**

Our last stop was an apple orchard on 100 acres that also had a café and bar. Steve Pennings bought it over 30 years ago and it is, as he says, an Agri-entertainment business. Families and school groups come in and pick on their own and they do face paintings, Easter egg rolling contests, hay rides and more. The view of this place was incredible with rolling hills and green grass. In my opinion, this is much more work than just farming only, as they deal have to deal with a lot of children and parents for these events. I bet he does not have any trouble going to sleep at night.

This is a trip I will never forget. I got to know my classmates even more and share some great experiences, food, and see things I never knew existed. It also gave me a better perspective, not just how the big cities of Washington, D.C. and New York City are and the culture, but opened my eyes to the rural areas and their way of farming and the challenges they face.





*Marsha Moss (#14)*  
*TALL Class XII – Session #4*  
*Washington, DC, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York*  
*April 30- May 8, 2011*

**April 30, 2011 – Saturday**

Class members gathered in the Houston airport to depart for Washington, DC. Each time we gather for a session, it is like we were high school classmates. Everyone just picks up where they left off, discussing family events/work and their expectations of the upcoming session. The friendships that formed have been a blessing and will surely continue.

As we arrived in Washington, DC, the class went on an evening “Washington after Dark” tour. The tour was guided by an individual that knew a lot of history and factoids about the different monuments and our forefathers. I have seen the monuments during the day and a self-guided tour, but this was much better. I feel like I got so much more from this guided tour.

**May 2, 2011 - Monday**

***Welcome to USDA – U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack***

The USDA is made up of approximately 100,000 employees with over 7,000 locations. Of the population, less than 2% are in agriculture; however, 1 in 5 Americans are touched by agriculture. Additionally, 1 in 12 jobs are connected to agriculture.

Secretary Vilsack was able to join the class and discussed some important issues facing agriculture. The secretary stressed the importance for rural America to have the capacity to be self-sufficient. In the U.S., only about 5-7% of a family’s disposal income is spent on food whereas other countries spend 20% of their income on food. Secretary Vilsack indicated that it has been a record year in agriculture for exports with approximately \$47 Billion in surplus. Specifically, he feels the challenges facing agriculture are the large percentage of farmers over 65 years of age in rural America, farm income and higher incidences of dangers on the farm which contribute to higher health care costs. To overcome these challenges, we must attract income and create off-farm income sources, expand credit, look at alternative energy/utilities, utilize tax cuts for business expenses, search for new innovations and create job opportunities. Based on a class question, Secretary Vilsack indicated that people in agriculture should research the various issues, particularly those regarding the EPA. Specifically, the secretary indicated that every five years EPA must look at the issues. In regards to the dust rule, Mr. Vilsack stated that EPA has no goal in regulating dust for agriculture. With all the news concerning EPA and negative effects on agriculture, I will be definitely be watching this to see if the USDA might come out with some clarification on how agriculture is exempt from the dust regulations.

***Environment & Green House Gases – Mary Ann Rozum, National Program Leader & Environment***

Ms. Rozum spoke about various issues relating to the environment and green house gases. She described that man-made management has changed the climate. USDA is working or has teamed up with various groups to look at the USGS’s water census, water policy, water trading policy, endangered species, research on the climate change and research on green house gas emissions. Specifically, the USDA is collecting emissions from livestock facilities and feeding the results into an international database that will be used to establish a background for emission data. It was noted that Europe, Australia, New Zealand and Japan were among the leaders in this research. Time did not permit questions, but I was curious as to what the database would be used for and how “international” values would affect the U.S. with different regulatory and management scenarios. Concerning the ever prominent water front, she indicated that the water policy is a “state’s right”. It will be interesting to see how long this remains the USDA’s stance.

***Update on the Farm Bill – Michael Scuse, Acting under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services***

Mr. Scuse spoke to the TALL class on the various FSA programs. One program in particular that is utilized by many is the crop insurance program. Last year, \$78 Billion in crops were protected under this program. One program that I had never heard of was the Foreign Agriculture Service. Approximately \$135 Billion in agricultural products are projected to be exported this year. While the U.S. is recognized as having a good quality product, this service/program has 97 offices in 78 different countries to support trade issues that might arise. Mr. Scuse stressed that the USDA will continue to look at existing and new projects that farmers and ranchers need.

***Overview of the SNAP Program – Jessica Shahin, Associate Administrator for Supplemental Nutrition Programs, Food and Nutrition Service***

Ms. Shahin highlighted the SNAP program, which is basically the food stamp program. This program serves 1 in 4 Americans, with current figures at a record high of 44 Million people served per month. It was interesting to note that 40% of the people that participate in the program have earned income and just need help with groceries. This program is administered by the states. The partnership with the states, gives them the opportunity to decide how they want to spend the funds. The SNAP funds will reimburse states that provided education by up to 50% based on a capped formula grant approach. The administered amount is \$1 per meal in benefits. The program helps the local economy by promoting spending. For every \$5 in activity, then one might see \$9 in economic activity. There is some legislation being proposed to limit what can be purchased on or through the program. Other areas of research are how the USDA can promote the local farmer markets with the SNAP program.

***U.S. Agricultural Exports: Is the Sky the Limit? – Dr. Sherry Wise, Chief Economist, Livestock & Seed Programs, Agricultural Marketing Service***

Dr. Wise discussed the factors and issues relating to agriculture exports. In 2011, estimates show that \$5 Billion are expected to be exported. The market fundamentals of supply and demand determine the exports and price given for exports. She indicated that several demand factors such as an increased standard of living, greater demand for protein, unique characteristics of the U.S. products and value of the U.S. dollar relative to other currencies have played a role in the export markets. Conversely, the supply factors of influence are the abundance capacity/resource base, competing exporter countries, weather and disease issues. Dr. Wise discussed the protein sector, beef exports are almost back to the level before the 2002 BSE outbreak. Currently we import more than we export, but in 2010 the figures went negative so the trend might be changing. The pork and poultry exports have been growing and creating sector profitability. The TALL class was encouraged to look at the projections and the future demands with the growing developing countries.

***Retail: Bridging the Gap between Producers and Consumers – Tres Bailey, Director of Agriculture, Food and Trade Federal Government Relations, Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.***

Mr. Bailey discussed the Wal-Mart success story of 4,000 stores in the U.S. and \$420 Billion in revenue. Interesting to note was that the food revenue accounts for at least 50% of the total for the stores. The company is expanding overseas in areas such as Japan, China and India, which have seen exponential growth. Over the last five years, Wal-Mart Stores has been looking at how the sustainability of agriculture affects the retail market. One study in particular looked at life cycle of a tub of sour cream. The stores want to know what inputs are used in the making the product and the supply chain it goes through. The goal is to do a life cycle analysis on every product sold by the stores.

***American Farm Bureau Federation***

The next stop in the day was at the American Farm Bureau Federation. The Farm Bureau is a federation that is ranked in the top 25 organizations that had an influence in Washington, D.C. The 6 million members of the Farm Bureau drive the organizations take on various issues. We heard from very impressive speakers on issues relating to livestock, immigration and trade. The organization feels the larger issues on the horizon for its

members are broadband, energy and health care. We were given multiple issue papers that I believe will be very helpful in educating myself about various topics that might come up in promoting agriculture.

***Welcome and Overview of the President's Rural Agenda – Doug McKalip, Senior Policy Advisor for Rural Affairs, Domestic Policy Council***

The President's agenda for the rural areas are innovations in rural development, education and increasing the 20% rural broadband, defining rural and urban needs as it relates to the farm bill. Mr. McKalip noted that over 26,000 miles of rural roads have been repaired through the Recovery Act and additionally jobs were regained. Pertaining to the reauthorization of the farm bill, a few items on the agenda is to simplify programs, enhance program efficiencies and promote water conservation. A note of interest, Mr. McKalip's presentation began with a fact that the farm economy (dairy and livestock production) reached a record level in 2010. No note was made to what challenges agriculture has faced before this "record" year.

***Outline of the President's Energy Agenda Programs and Policies – Dan Utech, Deputy Director to the President for Energy and Climate Change Policy***

Mr. Utech discussed with the goal to protect and encourage our own production, noted that 11 to 12 deep water drilling permits had been issued and advances in farming operations. He described that the President wants to provide efficiency with biogas and incentives to put more efficient products in the homes. He suggested the group checkout the remarks on energy policy made by the President at Georgetown University and also the energy blueprint.

***Overview of Let's Move and Healthy Nutrition Initiatives – Robin Schepper, Executive Director of Let's Move***

The program, which started in February 2010, is designed to help the 1 in 3 American children that are overweight or obese. Weight issues have been linked to the top ten diseases. This has been identified as a public health crisis and all sectors must be changed. She explained that 30 years ago we were eating 15 lbs less sugar than we are today. Some companies are changing their ways to meet the concerns about our children's nutrition. It begins with proper nutrition. Nutrition was noted as linked to academic excellence and performance in school.

***Administrations Initiatives on Immigration Issues – Felicia Escobar, Senior Advisor on Immigration Policy***

Ms. Escobar discusses the administration's view on immigration. She indicated a focus in the near future included enforcement in the interior, targeting the workers in the labor force, focus on the bad actors, streamline the green card process, rewrite the laws/reform, the need for the H2A program to be revamped in the agriculture community and a need for an improved employer verification system.

***Dinner with Former Congressman Charlie Stenholm***

The class enjoyed a great meal and fellowship at the historic Capital Bar & Grill with former Congressman Charlie Stenholm. Mr. Stenholm is a joy to visit with. He is passionate about agriculture and proved that during his tenure as a congressman and time spent on the House Committee on Agriculture.

**May 3, 2011 – Tuesday**

***India Embassy***

The visit to the embassy was very informative. I have a better grasp of the area we will be visiting during our international trip. The growth in the country was outstanding, with a population growth of 1.2% yearly. This equates to one Australia each year. Honestly my initial thought of India was that I would see areas of poverty and older agricultural practices, however, the innovations and infrastructure described were vast and incremental. India is primarily an agriculture society, with 15% (\$1.5 Trillion) in the GDP coming from agriculture. It was described as having the largest democracy in the world. Between 2007-2012, India

estimates spending \$490 Billion on infrastructure. I feel that I will be surprised and my perception of India will be changed during our trip.

***Current Issues Facing the Congress and Important Agriculture Issues – Senator John Cornyn***

I was impressed by Senator Cornyn. Interestingly, the first discussion was that Washington should watch reality and stay in touch with the real world. The current issues the Senator described were jobs, spending and debt. He noted that \$0.40 out of every \$1 is borrowed. We are currently in \$14.3 Trillion in debt, which works out to \$46,000 for each person. The main agriculture issues he will be focusing on are the EPA/regulatory arena, cap and trade legislation and the Clean Water Act.

***Markets, Imports/Exports, Production US/World, Domestic and Foreign Policy and the Function of the US Grains Council – Thomas Dorr, President and CEO, U.S. Grains Council***

The purpose of the council is about developing markets, enabling trade and improving lives. The council has offices in various parts of the world with approximately \$5.6 Million in member support, \$15.4 Million from USDA/FSA Funds and \$7.8 Million in non-cash support. Policies regarding trade, demand and marketing are considered a priority this year. The global demand for corn is projected to increase in countries such as China and India, which both having a greater than 8% GDP in growth. In India, in 2019/2020 the imports are estimated to be 775 metric tons. The other figures presented have me excited to see India and the growth that is posed for that country.

***New Farm Bill and Current Issues Facing U.S. Agriculture – Congressman Frank Lucas, Chairman of the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture***

Chairman Lucas talked about the House Ag Committee and the largest issue on the horizon was the farm bill. The committee is made up of 46 members, with ½ being freshman delegation. This will be a challenge to teach the committee members and see where they stand on agricultural issues. The upcoming farm bill will have to be written with real figures and look at less money to spend.

***Current Agricultural Issues and the New Farm Bill – Congressman Mike Conaway, 11<sup>th</sup> Congressional District of Texas***

Congressman Conaway encouraged the class to continue to tell the story of agriculture around Washington, D.C. He indicated that everyone will have to see what figures/amounts we will have to work with for the farm bill. A fellow classmate asked about his views on the Dune Sage Lizard, which is creating some buzz from the Fish and Wildlife. He was very concerned about this issue and stressed the economic, emotional and logics behind the listing. The issue will drastically affect the oil/gas industry, with an estimated 1,000 drilling permits that would be lost in approximately 5 TX counties.

***Restoring America's Promise for Future Generations – Congressman Bill Flores, 17<sup>th</sup> Congressional District of Texas***

Congressman Flores' background was primarily in energy, which was interesting and definitely plays a large role in the agriculture economy. He estimates that the current energy costs are about 80% of what we will see in the future. Today we import 60% of our energy needs. Two bills to watch are HB 1239 and HB 993, which relates to the damage that has been done by the administration and would open up the offshore drilling.

***Homeland Security/Border Issues and Immigration – Congressman Henry Cuellar, 28<sup>th</sup> Congressional District of Texas***

Congressman Cuellar briefly discussed the emotional issue of immigration. Immigration reform is needed and has not occurred since 1986. Areas for reform are border security, the guest worker program, program for ag workers.

### **May 4, 2011 – Wednesday**

#### ***Bonita Farms – Bill Boniface, Owner***

The large 120 horse operation was impressive. The 400-acre facility is family owned and operated with everyone living on the property. The operation stands two studs breeding between 85 to 125 mares each year. In addition to the breeding facility, the training facility can hold up to 50 horses. I was interested by the family's on-site farm diversification into merlot grapes for wine making and 7,500 christmas tree operation.

#### ***Waffle Hill Farm – Ned Sayre, Owner***

The Sayre family operation consists of 300 acres and 60 angus cows. The operation includes Deer Creek Beef of Hartford County. The beef company began in 2001 and sales to farmers markets, locally and to some restaurants. The family teamed up with a neighbor and feeds enough cattle to harvest approximately 45 head per year. The cattle are fed silage and corn diet. The harvest beef is aged 2-3 weeks and will grade mid to upper choice. Another interesting note was that this farm participates in the county ag preservation program. This program purchased the development rights on the farm; however, allows the family and one generation to build homes on the family farm. This is a very popular program in this part of the country.

#### ***Broom's Bloom Dairy***

Lunch was amazing! The dairy has an onsite restaurant that serves a vast array of items. Mrs. Bloom grew up in the area on a farm and noticed that their farm was highway positioned to make specialty type shop of ice cream, cheese and other locally grown items. The farm has been in the family since the 1700s and is very important to the family. Daily her husband milks 53 cows and enjoys the life. The dairy production is partially utilized in the cheese production, but the remaining goes to the Maryland-Virginia Cooperative member. This is an impressive operation with urban sprawl all around them. I was amazed at how much traffic/business that moved in and out of the store that afternoon.

#### ***Russell Redding, Dean of Agriculture, Delaware Valley College***

Mr. Redding was our dinner speaker once we arrived in Pennsylvania. The main message was that each of us should figure out what "our" vision for agriculture is which may or may not be the same as the rest of the class. Additionally, Mr. Redding stressed the average age of the farmer is 65 and the importance of transitioning the family farm. Everyone must utilize the resources available to start the planning process and figure out the best approach for transition.

### **May 5, 2011 - Thursday**

#### ***Produce Auction***

We arrived to the auction site to find one large open sided barn. The auction started in 1980 by a group of farmers to provide an outlet for the produce and product they produced. The extension agents estimated the earnings at an impressive \$10 Million per year, based on an 8% selling commission. During our visit, the produce was not in season but the ornamental flowers were. The amount of flowers and quality was outstanding. The fast paced atmosphere was comprised of wholesale buyers and the plain community wishing to buy in bulk.

#### ***Amish Farm Tour – Sam & Susie Riehl***

Starting college in the Stephenville area, I was around Amish families and always had so many questions. This tour answered all of them and also changed my perception of this group. Mr. Riehl allowed the class to ask anything, truly anything. The topic of questions were broad, but gave us an idea of the way of life chosen by this family. The family farm is a working dairy and has a quilt shop. Mr. Riehl brought me to tears discussing his pleasure in farming and the fact that his children and grandchildren and involved are so happy.

### **Lenwood Sloan, PA Film Commissioner & Cultural Heritage Director**

Mr. Sloan discussed with the group after lunch the urban issues relating to community and the arts. Particularly the attraction of the film industry. In Pennsylvania, the top economy is agriculture and the second is tourism. Being the 4<sup>th</sup> most popular place to visit, the area is included along with Texas one of the top 3 attractions for the film industry. The film industry helps create infrastructure, tax credits and the development of employment opportunities.

### **May 6, 2011 - Friday**

#### ***David Mosner, Inc.***

Another family operation! The company was started in 1957 and is family owned and operated. Our tour was given by the three children of Mr. Mosner. The meat company is located in Hunts Point district, which is responsible for the movement of 80-90% of all food for the New York area. The primary market for the business is box meat; however, we witnessed the selling of whole hanging cuts being picked up by various restaurants. Ms. Mosner reported that they have 600 active clients and supply 100-200 per day. The small processing plant is 25,000 sq ft and primarily processes veal, lamb and specialty pork and beef products. I was impressed by the management of the operation and dedication to the agriculture industry in education and research.

#### ***Hunts Point Terminal Produce Cooperative Association, Inc.***

Our next stop was the 123 acre produce cooperative. The site consists of buyers/sellers with warehouse space and brokerage offices. There are 43 companies that operate independently within the cooperative. Interestingly the products do not come in with prices; it's a free trade market system with the business being face to face or over the phone. The volume of product that is reported to move through this terminal is mind boggling. During our visit, there was discussions on the future of the cooperative. Some changes are in store and I am interested in watching to see if a renovation or move is planned.

#### **Community Kitchen in West Harlem**

I volunteer on a weekly basis at the Ronald McDonald Hospital Family Room, but this is so much different. The community kitchen and food pantry feeds the hungry. To my dismay, the kitchen prepared and served us a wonderful lunch. The significance of a kitchen like this is so important especially in today's economy. I would have enjoyed more of a class volunteer sitting, but was gracious for the meal and operation overview.

#### ***How the capital markets funds agriculture through the Farm Credit System – Doug Williams, Managing Director, Federal Farm Credit Banks***

Mr. Williams gave the class a report on various topics relating to market/economic and agriculture conditions. He viewed a few key factors such as employment numbers came out that were better than expected, corporations having strong balance sheets and that he saw deposit slips are currently high meaning there is money to invest. As Mr. Williams moved into the agriculture conditions, he discussed that in 2011 the forecasted cash income is expected to rise 8% over the 2010 forecast. This is 16.7% above the previous 10-year average. Many factors are leading to this increase. One is that agriculture exports, imports and trade surplus are projected at record highs. In 2011, the agricultural exports are projected to be as high as \$126.5 Billion. From Mr. Williams' presentation, it appeared agriculture might be in for a few good years at least.

#### ***U.S. Economic Conditions – Norman Gertner, Regional Economist for FDIC in NYC***

Mr. Gertner briefly explained the movement of the economy over the last couple of years. In 2009, there was a drop in the GDP of 4.1%. However, the recovery models are projecting a 3.5% increase in GDP over the next couple of years. From Jan. 2008 to Feb. 2010, approximately 8.75 Million jobs were lost. The most recent employment figures indicate the employment rate is up 9%, so the recovery from the recession is happening and at a slow rate.

## **May 7, 2011 - Saturday**

### ***Martin Nop Dairy***

This family operated dairy farm has 250 head and milk 170 cows daily. Mr. Nop graciously opened up his facility and gave us a tour. He moved from Holland with his family at the age of 5. Over the years, the family started small and grew into the dairy business. The small but impressive operation consisted of grass fields and 120 acres of silage production. During the tour, the dad and two sons visited with the class about their operation and also about the Texas dairies. I enjoyed the relaxing tour and even watched his grandchildren ride their toy tractors around the farm and cows.

### ***Rogowski Farm & Lunch***

This lunch and stop was special for Dr. Jim. We were treated to a wonderful traditional polish style lunch at the Rogowski Farm at their farm restaurant. During lunch, we had the pleasure of hearing from the New York Commissioner of Agriculture. It was interesting to see that there were very little differences in agriculture concerns from Texas to New York.

The farm diversified a couple of years ago by adding a farm store/restaurant and catering business. The farm is uniquely located in the black muck soil region in Orange County, New York. The family owned and operated farm consists of 150 acres of fertile muck soils where they grow over 250 varieties of produce each year. The operation takes advantage of diversification by promoting a "certified naturally grown" product and in the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program.

### ***DeBuck's Sod Farm***

Our next tour was of DeBuck's Sod Farm. Another impressive 340-acre operation is in the unique muck soil region. The soil is extremely fertile and has a large percentage of organic matter which lends to the perfect sod farm operation. On the 340 acres of production, the farm will harvest approximately 150 acres of sod each year. Primarily a wholesale type situation; however, the farm just started public sales by holding a Super Saturday Sod Sale. Just down the road, the Mr. DeBuck has diversified the operation to include a golf course which his son manages.

### ***Pennings Orchards***

The Pennings Orchard is family owned and operated. The orchard is where I learned about agri-entertainment. The working orchard also contains a farm store. The store contains a market for produce, restaurant, bar area, lawn/garden greenhouse and specialty items. Mr. Pennings gave us a tour and discussed his role in running the farm store. During the apple season, families visit the farm to pick their own apples. While there the families can shop, have lunch/dinner, have a glass of apple cider and all while watching live music during special events. It is a unique operation and caters to the urban crowds situated so close to their farm.

### ***Conclusion***

As the week closed and as I looked back on the week. I saw that people in agriculture must get out and visit with the representatives/staff and get the message about agriculture out. Make friends with the people that vote on your livelihood. As we traveled northeast, I learned that the farms visited are truly family farms. The farms often had more than one family living on the farm and all took part in the operation. I saw that the farms utilized diversification to keep the farm income coming in. Most of the diversification revolves around working with the urban areas to find their niche and capitalize on that. I enjoyed the trip and learned a great deal about the agriculture sectors that I knew nothing about.

**Bruce Fleming #5**  
**TALL XII**  
**Session #3**  
**Washington D.C., Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York**  
**April 30 – May 8, 2011**

Washington After Dark tour

Excellent. I thought the tour was outstanding and the tour guide was very informative and did a great job explaining the sights and educating us about the history behind all the monuments. We saw the Vietnam War Memorial, the Korean War Memorial, the Iwo Jima (Marine Corps ) Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial, the Jefferson Memorial, the Washington Memorial, and the World War II Memorial. In addition, we saw the Capital Building and the White House. I was amazed at the amount of memorials we were able to see in such a short period of time. It was a very informative tour and went a long way in emphasizing the history of Washington. I also thought it helped set the stage for the TALL session and emphasized the importance of Washington going into the future, and how important Washington is to accomplish anything in agriculture, or any other field of interest.

Welcome to USDA, Tom Vilsack, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture

Wow, a conversation with the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. Mr. Vilsack was considering the impacts, both positive and negative of breaching a Mississippi river levee and flooding prime farmland. Obviously he had numerous things on his agenda, so merely taking the time to speak with TALL was quite an honor. I was impressed with his knowledge of agriculture and the issues which we are facing. This was however my moment of awakening. I suddenly realized it wasn't about the issues, wasn't about agriculture, but was all about politics and party agendas. I had seen the party agendas and political divide in Austin, but it was centered around the budget deficit. In Austin, everyone on both sides of the political fence was still on board for the benefit of agriculture, they were just divided on how to fund and reach the agreed objectives. The conversation with Vilsack was the moment I realized that politics in Washington trump the issues. It may have "agriculture" in the subject line, and "agriculture" in an official title, but it's all about politics and reaching certain political agendas.

Environment & Green House Gases, Mary Ann Rozum

This was an interesting presentation. In today's world, anyone not concerned about the environment and green house gases, is massively out of step. As farmers and ranchers, we have to be good stewards of the land and environment for future generations, but we also have to proclaim our good deeds to all that will listen in order to avoid unnecessary and burdensome regulations. Ms. Rozum made the point that weather today is more volatile than in the past. I would agree with this statement, but would also

add that with today's instant news, weather extremes are suddenly broadcast to the world, so we as a society have become more aware these extremes. I was interested to learn that some invasive weeds grow better with increased levels of carbon dioxide. This could be a developing issue that may affect agriculture in the long term.

#### Update on the Farm Bill, Michael Scuse, Acting Under Secretary for Farm Services

Excellent. The Farm Bill is the one topic that is on everyone's mind in rural America. I learned that agriculture exports will shatter any previous record, but this is not due to increased commodity prices, but to actual demand. I knew we would reach new levels, but assumed that increased prices were skewing the numbers. I also learned that crop insurance will play a major role in the 2012 farm bill. As expected, crop subsidies will almost surely be eliminated.

#### Overview of SNAP Program, Jessica Shahin

Informative. I learned about the supplemental nutrition program and how it is almost 80% of the USDA budget. Ms. Shahin also did a great job explaining how SNAP is monitored, and what checks and balances are used to try and prevent fraud. In my personal perspective, I understand how SNAP can be a great safety net, but the fraud that seems to be rampant has hardened me to the cost/benefit scenario. I think Ms. Shahin did a good job in explaining what they are doing to try and eliminate fraud, and put some positive perspective on SNAP as still being a good social program.

#### U.S. Agriculture Exports, Dr. Sherry Wise

Good presentation on how exports are the key to keeping demand for agriculture products high, and how this demand translates into higher commodity prices. Commerce today is global, and that includes supply and demand for agriculture products.

#### Retail: Bridging the Gap between Producers and Consumers, Tres Bailey

Excellent. It was great to hear where Wal-Mart sees its growth into the future and what they see on the horizon. Mr. Bailey stated that Wal-Mart is growing exponentially overseas, and that grocery is becoming the larger part of Wal-Mart's domestic business. They see their future profitability being linked to cutting costs and finding ways to identify and make improvements. Large retailers such as Wal-Mart are going to drive innovations downward through the agriculture production chain. Therefore it's key that producers know where the large retailers are going, and what pathway they are on. I really enjoyed this presentation.

#### How AFBF Works as a National Organization

Very interesting. The comment was made that "The future of agriculture is directly linked to our ability to use the media to help get our message out." I think this is a very true statement, I also think it is one of the weakest areas of agriculture today.

Environmentalists and animal activists are experts at using the media to bash agriculture. There is a lot of erroneous and outright ridiculously wrong information in the media today regarding agriculture. We have to be proactive and not reactive. As a group, agriculture today is very weak in public relations.

#### Position as AZ liaison/Livestock Issues, Kelli Ludlum

Animal Welfare The U.S. Humane Society is the leading anti-ag organization with a stated goal of destroying production animal agriculture. Minimum space requirements and antibiotics in agriculture are going to become key issues. We are also seeing these groups deploy a new realm of tactics. If their goals cannot be met through the political arena, they are using the legal system to try and accomplish their goals. Unfortunately, this just puts more strain on our already burdensome legal system. These groups are highly organized and extremely well funded. Agriculture has to band together and take a stand against these groups.

#### Immigration, Paul Schlegal, Director Environmental and Energy Policy Team

Immigration is a very important topic for agriculture. The comment was made that “We have open borders for trade, but closed borders for labor.” This single statement sums up a major topic for agriculture. We have to have immigration reform. Agriculture has made amazing strides in using mechanization and technology to decrease the amount of labor involved, but we still have to have a stable and reliable pool of labor to get our products from the field to the table.

#### Trade, Dave Salmonsens, Senior Director, Congressional Relations AFBF

As we previously learned, exports are the key element in driving demand for U.S. agriculture products. We cannot develop new export markets if we don't have free trade, and a working World Trade Organization to mediate and solve any trade disputes. It is key for all areas of agriculture that we have a level playing field when it comes to trade. Politics and political agendas have no business involving themselves in the free trade arena. Supply and demand is NOT dependent on political involvement.

\*\*\* Prior to reviewing the speakers from the White House briefing, let me just say that whether or not you agree with the policies or the political agenda of the current administration, it was obvious that the speakers were passionate, believed in their policies, and were very knowledgeable. You don't get to this level of government without being extremely knowledgeable and well versed in your particular field of interest. \*\*\*

#### Welcome and Overview of the President's Rural Agenda, Doug McKalip, Sr. Advisor for Rural Affairs

I think everyone in TALL XII was impressed that we had a White House briefing. Mr. McKalip outlined three keys to helping rural America when we have a budget crisis.

1. Simplify programs.
2. Improve access to programs.
3. Enhance program performance.

These are all easy to say, but I personally feel that the bureaucratic implementation of these three simple steps will be much harder to implement.

#### Outline of the President's Energy Agenda Programs and Policies, Dan Utech

Mr. Utech outlined three keys to our energy future.

1. Develop and secure new sources of energy.
2. Increase efficiency and reduce energy usage.
3. Find alternatives to our current energy sources.

In addition to these three areas, he also touched briefly on the new revised fuel standards for the auto industry. I think he had an excellent presentation and his points were valid.

#### Overview of Let's Move and Health Nutrition Initiatives, Robin Schepper, Executive Director of Let's Move

Who can argue with the premise that as a nation, we need to eat more nutritiously and exercise more. I will make an observation though as it relates to agriculture. In history when more of the population was directly involved with agriculture, there was no obesity in the United States. Today we are trying to get Americans to grow gardens for fresh produce, fifty years ago gardens were common place as the American diet was highly dependent on fresh vegetables. That's just a personal observation.

#### Administrations Initiatives on Immigration Issues, Felicia Escobar, Sr. Advisor in Immigration Policy

Ms. Escobar outlined three keys to our immigration policy.

1. Border Enforcement.
2. Workplace Enforcement.
3. Streamline the legalization process.

These keys to the immigration policy may sound very simple, but we all know that they are much more complex than that. It was obvious that Ms. Escobar was extremely knowledgeable on the subject of immigration. Due to the unique immigration challenges facing Texas and Arizona, I think the group could have spent considerable time asking questions of Ms. Escobar. It was a very interesting and informative presentation.

#### Dinner with former Congressman Charlie Stenholm

Very entertaining. I enjoyed the evening with Mr. Stenholm. He was straight forward with his speech and passionate about his ideas. It was a very enjoyable evening.

#### Briefing at India Embassy, Vinay Kwatra, Ambassador of Commerce

Interesting. I didn't know that there were 16 official languages in India. The embassy was very nice and historic. It was great to visit the embassy and hear a presentation from the Ambassador of Commerce.

#### Current Issues Facing the Congress and Important Ag Issues, Senator John Cornyn

Very informative speech on what needs to happen. He specifically mentioned three things that the U.S. Congress needs to focus on.

1. Jobs
2. Spending
3. National Debt

Again, while simple on the surface, the implementation of these will prove much more difficult.

#### President and CEO of U.S. Grains Council, Mr. Thomas C. Dorr

Foreign trade is the key to success in the grain market. The domestic demand for grain is stagnant, thus profitability will rely on foreign demand. Grain went from a surplus driven market to a demand driven market. We have to have marketing of our product to drive demand overseas.

#### Director of Trade Policy, U.S. Grains Council, Mr. Floyd Gaibler

Creating demand into the future will rely on both national and international policy. The technical age of the internet has increased the world wide knowledge of grain uses and values. Policies are now needed to move the product overseas. Mr. Gaibler mentioned three keys for a successful future in grains.

1. Trade
2. Demand
3. Marketing

#### New Farm Bill and Current Issues Facing U.S. Agriculture, Congressman Frank Lucas

Congressman Lucas was the most straight forward and honest speaker I heard in Washington. He was very direct on what he predicts will happen with the 2012 Farm Bill and the process the bill will take on its way through to President Obama's desk. He explained how the Ag Sub-Committee was made up, the challenges it faces with 50% of Congressmen on the Committee being all Freshmen, and the order in which individual pieces of the Farm Bill will be addressed in order to capitalize the return to Agriculture. He was the only speaker to announce that the Farm Bill will not materialize until late 2012 and will be presented for signature around the time that President Obama is campaigning for re-election.

#### Current Agriculture Issues and the New Farm Bill, Congressman Mike Conaway

Good common sense ideas regarding conservation and regulations at the federal level. Congressman Conaway has a very good understanding of the issues facing agriculture and how common sense is not always used in drafting regulations. He had a very interesting response to the proposed regulations for listing the Sand Dune Lizzard as an endangered species. I'm not familiar with the Sand Dune Lizzard in my part of Texas, but I can certainly empathize with those TALL members facing this challenge.

#### Restoring America's Promise for Future Generations, Congressman Bill Flores

Agriculture from a different perspective. Congressman Flores is very knowledgeable in the energy business, and viewed agriculture from this perspective. He stated that energy policy is the key to economic growth and that energy is key to all U.S. production. These are true statements. In agriculture we sometimes get deeply involved in our own issues and fail to realize the importance of our inputs. We cannot have agriculture production without energy, and energy prices are one of our greatest cost inputs. It was interesting to get a perspective of agriculture from an energy input point of view.

#### Homeland Security/Border Issues and Immigration, Congressman Henry Cuellar

Congressman Cuellar made the following points regarding immigration and border issues.

1. Border Security
  - a) No wall, if you build a wall, immigrants will build a taller ladder
  - b) Need technology and personnel at the border
2. Guest Worker Plan
  - a) We need workers in Ag, Foodservice, and Construction
3. Undocumented Immigration
  - a) no amnesty program
  - b) streamline the process to become U.S. citizens

#### "Liberty Smith" performance at Ford's Theater

Historic. It was amazing to attend a performance at the very theater where Lincoln was assassinated. The play was very good and entertaining.

#### Bonita Farm, Bill Boniface General Manager

Excellent. I really enjoyed the horse breeding farm. The weather was not very cooperative for the tour, but the information and limited tour was very entertaining. It's great to see and hear something not typical to Texas agriculture.

#### Waffle Hill Farm, Ned Sayre, Owner

It's always great to see how producers are adding value to their products. The future of agriculture will rely heavily on value added products. This was a good example of

how to add value, but that you have to know your market. Mr. Sayre was capitalizing on his market through the population and demographics of his area.

Broom's Bloom Dairy, David and Kate Dallam, Owners

Another good example of adding value to your products and catering to your local market. We hear a lot in agriculture about adding value to our products, but it's key that we also know and understand our market and our consumers.

Dean of Agriculture, Russell Redding, Delaware Valley College  
International Leadership Alumni Conference, Carrie Hamstra, Arizona CENTRL

Two very good presentations on the role of leaders in agriculture, and the continuing roll of TALL members. I think as TALL XII members we know we have a leadership roll in Agriculture and within our own specific industries. However we also need to remember that we have a continuing obligation to enhancing leadership opportunities for others, and to remain involved as alumni.

Leola Produce Auction

Very interesting. I was surprised at how small a geographical area the auction serves. Obviously this was dependent on the fact that the Amish cannot travel very far with horse and buggies. Being from the wide open spaces of Texas, our products travel a great distance to market. This was a new perspective, but again, you have to know your local market to decide what will work and what will not.

Tour of Amish Farm, Sam and Susie Riehl, Owners

Very Interesting. I really enjoyed the tour of the farm and all the information provided regarding the Amish culture. I now have a better understanding of the culture and of the misleading stereotypes that Hollywood movies have placed on the Amish. It was interesting to learn that retail sales generated more income than the farm. Many of the resale items were made in China, and were not actual Amish items. They definitely have a very good marketing tool and know their market.

Director of Cultural and Heritage Tourism, Lenwood Sloan

Good information on how to support tourism within this new economy. It was interesting how Mr. Sloan viewed charities and charitable contributions in this new economy. My small hometown has no tourism, and our charities are local and supported locally, both financially and with volunteers. I think a lot of Mr. Sloan's ideas would not work locally in my community, but it was an interesting presentation.

"Embracing New Normal", J.D. Dunbar

Excellent presentation on the qualities of leadership in the “new normal.” Ms. Dunbar is a great speaker and her presentation had plenty of energy and audience participation. It’s important as leaders that we don’t become complacent, and that we continue to lead, and to lead others to leadership opportunities. There are many dynamics to the world today, we have to adapt and change to be successful.

#### David Mosner Inc., Jessica Mosner

Very Interesting. I had never been through a veal harvesting facility. I was very impressed with the product flow through the facility, which might become very cramped when in full production. I was also impressed with the new marketing ideas and strategies that the second generation was implementing. Mosner is changing to meet the demands of today’s market. I feel this company will continue to be successful in their business ventures.

#### Overview of the Market, Myra Gordon, NY City Terminal Market

Huge. It is amazing how large the facility is. I was intrigued by the fact that given its size, it was still not large enough and much of the product was kept in refrigerated trailers. Logistics of an operation this size boggle the mind. My observation is that perhaps “free trade” is not occurring here. Since many of the tenants are 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generation, and free space rarely becomes available, I would think “free trade” at times could be compromised. I do think the market has outgrown its location and infrastructure. It will be interesting to see what direction they take in the future.

#### Community Kitchen and Food Pantry, West Harlem, Daryl Foriest

Was I the only one that heard the comments from the local citizens? While we were welcomed by the staff, I think the local reception was much less friendly. It was very awkward to partake of a meal at the community kitchen while others were turned away because they were closed. It was an interesting tour, and I think opened some minds regarding what others may or may not have in this world. I would recommend the next TALL group volunteer at the kitchen, but not partake in a meal.

#### How the capital markets fund agriculture though the Farm Credit System, Mr. Doug Williams

Interesting. I think we all need to know how capital is raised for agriculture. We are in a new lending environment, and access to capital is one of the major hurdles that agriculture is currently facing. Agriculture needs to understand the complications of accessing capital, and bankers need to understand the complications of agriculture. There needs to be education on both sides of the fence.

#### U.S. Economic Conditions, Mr. Norman Gertner, Economist for F.D.I.C.

Interesting. Very informative on what has happened to the U.S. economy and what is expected to occur in the near and long term future. Mr. Gertner was a good speaker and brought energy to his presentation. The later part of his presentation may have become more tainted with personal and political beliefs, but his presentation on the economy was very good.

#### Tour Martin Nop Diary, Martin Nop, Owner

Interesting. I am often amazed at just how small the world is when you visit with people and find you have common interests and know many of the same people. I was impressed with the fact that the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generations are continuing to make a living on the farm. It's different to see such a small farm generating profits when in Texas the farms and dairies are much, much larger.

#### Lunch and Tour at Rogowski Farm

Very good tour. I was amazed by the "muck" soil and the way it would move underneath your feet. I was intrigued by the lifeline of the drainage ditches, when we would consider irrigation ditches to be lifelines. Very interesting tour and the lunch was spectacular.

#### NYS Dept of Ag and Markets, Daryl Aubertine, Commissioner

Interesting. I was amazed to be in a part of the country that was so different from my own, seeing agriculture that was very different from what I'm familiar with, and yet we face many of the same problems. It is apparent that agriculture has to band together not by industry or location, but all together to fight these shared problems.

#### Tour DeBuck's Sod Farm

Green Grass?? I'm so envious. This was a fascinating farm for me because there are no sod farms in my part of Texas. It was very interesting to see how they harvest the sod and hear the different aspects of the sod business. Perhaps I will have green grass when it finally rains in Texas.

#### Tour Pennings Orchards, Steve Pennings, Owner

Very interesting. The Pennings definitely know their local market and demographics. I learned two new terms on this tour.

1. Agri-entertainment
2. Localvore-buying and supporting locally

#### Review

I was very impressed with this session. I saw a new and varied side of agriculture that I had very little knowledge of. I have a new understanding of how things work in the

political environment of Washington, the capital markets of New York. I now have an appreciation for Upper State New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland agriculture. While this narrative may seem long, it is but a token of the amount I learned on this TALL session.