



### **Federal Policy Division Welcomes Isabella Quinonez**

Our Federal Policy Division is happy to announce that we have brought in a new team member this week, Isabella Quinonez. Isabella is a recent Sacramento State graduate that studied Political Science and has previous experience working on several state-level advocacy campaigns. In her role as Public Policy Coordinator, she will help develop and improve the resources available to members from the federal policy perspective, as well as grow our outreach to both our county and Congressional partners. We are excited to have her join the team and wish her the best of luck!

### **Government Shutdown Looms**

With the end of September rapidly approaching, lawmakers in DC are working to avoid the potential economic and political fallout associated with a government shutdown. Originally, House GOP leadership had announced they had come to a funding agreement that would pass along party lines; however, several Freedom Caucus members quickly voiced their opposition to the measure. In the following days, more moderate Republicans have increased their attacks on the holdouts, warning that any inaction would prove disastrous for both the country and party.

The most recent shutdown in late 2018/early 2019 was seen as a political blow to Republicans at the time, and it's historically something both parties are eager to avoid taking the blame for. With primary season beginning in about four months, lawmakers are no doubt worried about avoiding any self-inflicted political wounds. Several House Republicans have started looking at potential bipartisan packages instead, which would kickstart the negotiation phases earlier than expected. Details on those potential deals have yet to be revealed though, but CAFB will continue to update members as this develops.

### **Key CAFB Forestry Priority Passes in the House**

Last week, the Accurately Counting Risk Elimination Solutions (ACRES) bill passed the U.S. House of Representatives with overwhelming support, receiving 406 votes in favor and only 4 votes against. Representative Tom Tiffany (WI-07) introduced the ACRES Act earlier this year in response to investigative reports that revealed inaccuracies in how federal agencies, such as the U.S. Forest Service, reported their mitigation efforts in fuel reduction. The bill mandates that various land management agencies produce a detailed public report on hazardous fuel levels specific to each acre, and the overall wildfire risk. A standardized data review by the Government Accountability Office will determine the agencies' bi-yearly progress.

In a published statement, Rep. Dan Newhouse (WA-04) noted the Caldor Fire of 2021, which burned 221,835 acres of the Sierra Nevada. "As Chairman of the Congressional Western Caucus, I know firsthand that rural communities across the West, including mine in Central Washington, are plagued by

catastrophic wildfires exacerbated by poor or inadequate forest management.” The bill will likely now move to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

### **EPA to Rework Endangered Species Act Obligations Following**

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finally received some resolution on a longstanding case regarding its obligations under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Originally started via a 2011 complaint, the Center for Biological Diversity essentially alleged that the EPA was failing to adequately review the impacts of potential pesticides on endangered species. Per their own account, EPA acknowledged they were only meeting about 5% of its ESA obligations in its annual pesticide reviews. A legal agreement approved in federal court will permit the EPA to group pesticides together in their reviews and will also require them to develop a strategy to protect species from herbicides by 2024 and insecticides by 2025. The agreement will also prevent the EPA from being able to immediately stop the sale and usage of certain pesticides that they deem are unnecessarily harmful. It also should speed up the review and approval process, which currently can take many years to be completed.

### **Homeland Security to Publish Rule on H2 Protections**

The H-2 programs have experienced significant growth in recent years as U.S. businesses face ongoing labor shortages. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has proposed reforms to enhance protections for temporary workers in the H-2A and H-2B programs and improve the program’s efficiency. The proposed changes seek to heighten safeguards for participating workers. This includes strengthening protections against employer exploitation and introducing whistleblower protections. The rules also address prohibitions on employer-imposed fees and extend grace periods for H-2 workers seeking employment or preparing to leave the United States. However, the employment grace period extension could impose additional costs for employers, as housing for H-2 employees would be extended. The proposal aims to make H-2 portability permanent, allowing employers to hire H-2 workers already in the U.S. while their petitions are pending. The 60-day public comment period will begin following the publication of the proposed rule in the Federal Register.

### **FMMO Hearings Continue**

The Federal Milk Marketing Order (FMMO) Pricing Formula hearing continued this week, with the American Farm Bureau representatives testifying three times so far. Testimony has also included several California dairy farmers as well. Talks have centered heavily around pricing and make allowances thus far, with several organizations submitting different plans on how to best alter some of the current calculations. FMMO has long been criticized for both its complexity and inflexibility. Several producers lost out significantly during the pandemic while other orders made substantial profits. The inflexible nature of pricing changes though meant that values were heavily distorted during the most difficult stretches of the COVID-19 pandemic. For now, the current trend and changes adopted are likely to improve the system as a whole.

[AFBF Make Allowances Article](#)