

Nebraska lawmakers will return to Lincoln to kick-off the 2019 legislative session, Wednesday, January 9. Lawmakers will work through a 90-day session slated to end the first week of June.

State senators will also be charged with electing leadership positions that will carry through the 2019 and 2020 sessions, including Speaker of the Legislature and Committee Chair positions. In addition to new leadership, the body will also have several new faces. Thirteen of the 49-member legislature will be new, several of which received the Nebraska Farm Bureau "Friend of Agriculture" designation in the General Election.

The election of Dist. 1 Sen. Dan Watermeier to the Public Service Commission and Dist. 49 Sen. John Murante to Nebraska State Treasurer left two seats to be appointed by Governor Pete Ricketts. Dist. 49 has been filled by Andrew LaGrone of Gretna and Dist. 1 has been filled by Julie Slama of Peru.

## 2019 STATE ISSUES PREVIEW



**Taxes:** Fixing Nebraska's overreliance on property taxes is our top priority. Nebraska Farm Bureau (NEFB) leadership and staff have been working through the interim, engaging with parties critical to getting a legislative package together that can include property tax relief.

NEFB will also be working on a permanent fix to ensure Nebraska farmers and ranchers don't pay more in personal property taxes because of federal tax law changes.

**Value-added Agriculture:** Promoting and defending livestock and value-added agriculture will also be a focus of the session. We'll be working to make updates to Nebraska's laws to make sure they respect the property rights of farmers and ranchers. Agriculture is continuing to change, and farmers and ranchers need the flexibility to change their operations to stay relevant whether that's using advancements in technology or changing the makeup of their operation, such as adding livestock to their operation.

**Rural Broadband:** Last session state senators passed legislation creating the Nebraska Broadband Task Force to look for ways to improve high-speed internet connection across the state. The key will be to more accurately and adequately map broadband availability across Nebraska, so we can make sure the Broadband Task Force is able to make solid recommendations to state and federal policymakers. The task force is required to report back to the legislature in November of 2019.

**Business Incentives:** There will also be considerable discussion this session about the future of state business incentives. It's important we analyze the effectiveness of existing laws designed to incentivize business, and any new or reformed package recognize the importance of our beef, dairy, pork, and growing poultry industries, as well as other value-added agriculture opportunities.

## TAKE ACTION

# ACTION ALERT

Text "NEFB" to **52886** to stay informed and contact our elected officials on key issues!

## 2019 FEDERAL ISSUES PREVIEW



NEFB continues to anticipate a busy 2019 in Washington, D.C. with action occurring on several policy priorities expected. Below is a short summary of what NEFB will be working on in the new year:

**Farm Bill Implementation:** NEFB will be working throughout the year to provide information to members on the many changes farmers and ranchers will find in the bill. From crop insurance and commodity program changes to the many reforms made to conservation programs, there is certainly plenty to unpack in this new farm bill. Please stay tuned for policy summaries, deadline updates, as well as a few informational meetings that will likely be scheduled early 2019.

**New Clean Water Rule:** At the end of 2018, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) unveiled their replacement for the 2015 WOTUS rule which NEFB strongly opposed. This new rule provides a considerable amount of regulatory certainty and limits the federal governments reach as it relates to water regulations. EPA will be making this new rule final in 2019.

**GMO Labeling:** The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) will soon be unveiling their new genetically modified organisms (GMO) ingredient disclosure rules. Following passage of legislation to prevent a patchwork of state level GMO labeling rules which would have created a nightmare situation for food companies, USDA's new rule will hopefully provide necessary information to consumers while at the same time educate them on the benefits and safety of GMO ingredients.

**Possible New Livestock Traceability and Antibiotic Rules:** The new year could bring a couple of rules livestock producers should closely monitor dealing with traceability as well as antibiotic usage. In 2018, USDA stated they were preparing to make a few traceability policy changes to improve livestock disease prevention. We also anticipate the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) releasing a series of new rules to place injectable livestock antibiotics under more veterinary supervision. NEFB will continue to provide updates on the latest developments on both issues and will work to make sure any changes follow closely with NEFB policy.

## 2019 NEFB-PAC CHALLENGE



The Nebraska Farm Bureau Political Action Committee (NEFB-PAC) is Nebraska Farm Bureau's way of supporting candidates for public office who understand the needs of agriculture and rural communities. We now have a state and national PAC, and dollars can be used to support candidates – who we call “Friends of Agriculture” – and/or support or oppose ballot initiatives.

In January 2019, NEFB-PAC will be rolling out a county-level challenge. With help from our Regional Managers, county Farm Bureaus will be challenged to increase their member contributions to the NEFB-PAC by 25 percent over the previous year.

Please see the attached memo from Mark McHargue, first vice president and Chair of the NEFB-PAC Executive Committee for additional information.

