



**National
Barley
Growers
Association**

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National Barley Growers Association

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Elections to Bring New Leaders and Changes for 2021

The 2020 U.S. Presidential election was closer than many polls showed and there are still several steps for the outcome to become official - states must certify their results, the Electoral College meets on December 14th to cast their votes, and on January 6th Congress approves the electoral votes. Barring some unprecedented turn of events, Joe Biden will become the next President.

A new Administration means we will have a new U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. The rumor mill is already swirling with names and a lot of speculation centers on former North Dakota Senator Heidi Heitkamp and current U.S. Representative Marcia Fudge of Ohio. No matter who becomes the next Secretary we know that any new Administration brings with it new priorities. The early expectations are that issues such as nutrition, conservation, climate change and sustainability will be among the next Administration's priorities. Of course, any changes will likely have to come from within the confines of existing programs, many of which are authorized through the Farm Bill that runs through 2023. With a closely divided Congress, major changes to farm programs are not likely.

Turning to Congress, there are still a few close House races where the outcome

is not official. While Democrats will maintain the House majority it will be with a smaller margin. Meanwhile Senate control will come down to run-off elections for both Georgia Senate seats on January 5th.

As a result of retirements and election outcomes, Congress will see some changes in Agriculture policy leaders. In the Senate, current Ag Committee Chairman Pat Roberts (R-KS) is retiring and Sen. John Boozman (R-AR) will become the top Republican on the Committee in 2021. Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) is expected to remain the top Democrat on the Committee. The Georgia run-off elections will determine Senate control and whether Boozman and Stabenow are Chair or Ranking Member.

House Ag Chairman Collin Peterson lost his re-election campaign setting up a competition between Rep. David Scott (D-GA) and Rep. Jim Costa (D-CA) to chair the committee. On the Republican side, Ranking Member Mike Conaway (R-TX) retired and Rep. Rick Crawford (R-AR), Rep. Glenn Thompson (D-PA) and Rep. Austin Scott (R-GA) are contenders to become the lead Republican on the committee. Committee leadership is decided by the respective parties and factors such as seniority, party loyalty, and policy expertise go into those choices.

As noted previously, the potentially divided government and close margins in Congress suggests neither side will be able to enact major policy initiatives. Initial focus is likely to remain on COVID pandemic response and the bare essentials of enacting annual appropriations bills to avoid a government shutdown. Hot button issues like health care, taxes, and immigration will likely remain in stalemate. An optimistic outlook for legislative progress hinges on long-standing relationships between Joe Biden and Senate Republicans enabling the two sides to compromise and enact initiatives of mutual interest. One such issue that would impact agricultural is transportation and infrastructure investments. The potential support for measures to stimulate the economy in the wake of the pandemic and the fact that the Highway Bill is due for reauthorization in 2021 could combine to create an opportunity for long awaited infrastructure investments, including roads, bridges, ports and waterways, and rural broadband. Whatever issues are on the agenda, NBGA will continue our efforts to have barley grower and industry priorities reflected in the policy decisions made in Washington.

Barley Priorities Reflected in Senate Agriculture Appropriations Bill

Ahead of the Lame Duck session the Senate released its FY2021 Ag Appropriations bill and barley priorities supported by NBGA fared well. Full funding was provided in the bill for the Wheat & Barley Scab Initiative, continued funding for the Small Grains Genomic Initiative, and first-time funding for the Barley Pest Initiative. Negotiating with the House and completing the appropriations bills will be the main legislative goal of the congressional Lame Duck session.

Save the Beer Economy Coalition Continues Push for Extension of Excise Tax Reform

The NBGA remains engaged with our industry partners in efforts to extend the federal beer excise tax reforms that are due to expire on December 31st. Preventing an increase in the federal beer excise tax rates is especially vital

as the industry copes with the dramatic COVID impacts on bars, restaurants and sporting events – the largest markets for the industry.

The “Save the Beer Economy” (SBE) coalition comprised of organizations in the brewing, hospitality, agriculture, manufacturing, retail, and other interested parties seeks to rally support by educating lawmakers at the state and federal levels on the negative impacts excise tax increases would have on workers, consumers, and businesses.

Senate Passes Grain Standards Act Reauthorization

On November 16th the Senate passed the bipartisan U.S. Grain Standards Reauthorization Act of 2020. Agriculture Committee leaders and supporters hope the bill will be passed by the House shortly after Thanksgiving. The current Grain Standards Act expires December 11. The reauthorization maintains certainty and transparency for the federal grain inspection system and its stakeholders.

NBGA Welcomes New Idaho Board Member

We have a new NBGA board member representing Idaho barley. Allen Young of Blackfoot, ID was elected by the Idaho Barley Commission to replace Scott Brown who termed off of the Idaho Barley Commission board at the end of June.

Lola Raska to Retire from Montana Grain Growers

This month the Montana Grain Growers Association (MGGA) announced that executive vice president Lola Raska will retire from the organization at the end of this calendar year. Lola has been on staff at MGGA for 21 years, serving as the organization’s farm policy associate and website manager before being hired as executive vice president in 2006. Prior to joining the staff, Raska represented District 9 on the MGGA board of directors from 1997 to 2001. She grew up on the family farm near Plentywood, MT and, after receiving a degree in ag science from Montana State University, has been involved in the Montana agricultural industry for over 40 years. Lola has been a huge contributor to NBGA over the years and her input, insights, and support will be greatly missed.

Alison Vergeront has been hired as MGGA’s new executive vice president, effective January 1, 2021. Alison was raised on the family farm near Polson, MT that was homesteaded in 1910. She has served as agricultural liaison and field representative for U.S. Senator Steve Daines for the past six years, regularly meeting with producers and other stakeholders across the state.

USGC Holds "Meet U.S. Malt" Workshop For Chinese Brewers

China is the world's largest beer-consuming nation, and Chinese brewers are showing increased interest in U.S. barley malt, thanks to new market access and a series of activities organized by the U.S. Grains Council (USGC) to introduce this key ingredient.

The "Meet U.S. Malt" workshop series kicked off in mid-October with the Council's first in-person malt promotion event with the Chinese beer industry. The workshop series follows a handful of virtual webinars over the past year focused on helping importers and end-users better understand the quality and brewing characteristics of U.S. malt and to encourage imports.

Nearly 40 people attended the event in-person in addition to 65 individuals registered for the webinar. The Council also live-streamed the event through Wechat, Weibo and TikTok, with more than 1,000 people viewing on these channels. The Council invited three leading Chinese brewers to be speakers on malt characteristics, U.S. malt quality and how to use specialty malt.

"Last year, we identified that many brewers in China simply do not know much about U.S. malt," said Wennie Liu, USGC program manager in China. "These brewers often purchase malt directly, meaning there is a need to educate end-users on U.S. barley and malt to build U.S. market share."

The Council has been co-sponsoring events over the past two years with industry associations and stakeholders and organizing workshops like the one in October.

The Council will continue the "Meet U.S. Malt" workshop series with similar events in Wuhan and Shenzhen in November and December. Pub and brewery owners are also reaching out to the Council to organize similar types of events in their businesses.

Thanks to these efforts and a strong partnership with an importer in China, China is importing record amounts of U.S. malt. China imported 7,652 metric tons of malt from January to September 2020, yet U.S. malt only represented 0.4 percent market share - meaning there is significant opportunity to increase exports to this specific market.

"While these imports are small, they are still record-setting amounts," Liu said. "We will continue building upon these initial purchases as malt importers learn more about the quality and availability of U.S. barley malt. Malt promotion in China has a long-term payoff, but we expect imports to increase as China's small but rapidly growing craft beer industry develops."

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