

MISSOURI NEWS SCENE



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U.S. Sen. McCaskill procures feedback before farm bill vote

By JERILYN JOHNSON

In preparation for her 2007 Farm Bill vote, U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill spent the last week of August in her home state, gathering feedback from farmers and ranchers. Her farm bill tour hit 13 locations across the state, representing various aspects of Missouri's diverse agricultural industry.

"When I have a chance to vote on the farm bill, it's important that I vote for what's best for Missouri agriculture," McCaskill says. "My mission is to spend more time listening and understanding what farmers and ranchers need in new farm bill legislation."

Topics of discussion at each stop included subsidy limits, keeping families and children on farms, country-of-origin labeling, national animal identification, and health care.

One stop on her tour was the Litton Agri-Science Learning Center at Chillicothe on Aug. 28. While there, McCaskill noted that late leader Jerry Litton remains an inspiration for her and many Missourians. Mildred Litton, Jerry's mother, was in attendance and greeted McCaskill.

"This is a perfect stop to discuss farm bill policy," McCaskill said. "What we are facing in agriculture today is a clash between a way of life and a new culture of technology. What Jerry Litton was all about was harnessing technology to advance agriculture ... to do things with science and research to produce more and better quality food. But there are consequences to producing more and better. How we take care of the land and, at the same time, push and prod for more and more to feed a growing population ... all of those things we have to work on in the farm bill."

Key Points

- Sen. Claire McCaskill conducts farm bill listening sessions.
- Litton Agri-Science Learning Center was important stop for senator.
- Farm bill tour included stops at farms, biofuels plants and beef feedlot.

Biofuel stops

To gather feedback and express her support of Missouri's growing bio-fuels industry, McCaskill made stops at the Show Me Energy Cooperative at Centerview on Aug. 29, at Mid-Missouri Energy in Malta Bend on Aug. 30, and at Global Fuels LLC at Dexter on Aug. 31.

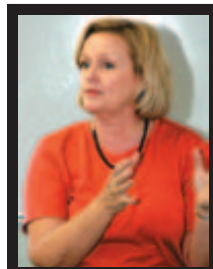
The Missouri Corn Growers Association's Chevy Suburban transported the senator and her staff throughout the week. After driving around in the flex-fuel vehicle, McCaskill recognizes firsthand the need for additional E85 stations throughout the state.

Cattle call

The Missouri Cattlemen's Association hosted the senator at Circle A Angus Ranch's north location near Huntsville. The stop highlighted modern beef production practices. McCaskill got a look at cow-calf production and toured the ranch's new covered feedlot facility.

At Circle A Angus Ranch, McCaskill discussed with producers the need to embrace the private sector's ability to adapt to market signals without government interference, voluntary animal identification, excessive regulations and county health ordinances.

"The Missouri Cattlemen's Association was pleased Sen. McCaskill took time to visit with Missouri beef producers and to learn more about our dynamic industry," says Jeff Windett, MCA executive vice president.



SHOW-ME VOTE: U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill says she will vote for what's best for Missouri agriculture.

House farm bill raises issues Senate version must address

THE U.S. House of Representatives version of the 2007 Farm Bill is passed and awaiting a Senate version. Before he resigned, Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns wasn't happy with the House start and wanted to see the Senate include some additions in its version.

One challenge is the income limits on who can receive farm support. The House version has a \$2 million income limit, which is 10 times what the Bush administration proposed in its draft farm bill released earlier this year. During a panel discussion on the farm bill held at the 2007 Farm Progress Show, Johanns said the Senate version of the bill would have to be closer to the Bush proposal.

Johanns said program payments are difficult to address, but they must be addressed or the public won't support farm programs. The Senate was expected to take up discussion of the bill later in September, and Johanns was optimistic a farm bill could be passed before year-end.

"I don't think an extension of the 2002 Farm Bill is what we really want," he said at a media conference during the show. "And I don't think we would want to be working on a farm bill during a presidential election."

Another hot topic in the House version of the farm bill is a provision to raise taxes on foreign corporations doing business in the United States. Johanns told the Farm Progress Show crowd that no farm bill has contained a tax increase since the first one in 1933, and that was declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court.