

# Eminent domain tops Farm Bureau agenda

By J.T. SMITH

**T**EXAS Farm Bureau president Kenneth Dierschke of San Angelo says eminent domain is at the top of his hot-issue list for the 80th session of the Texas Legislature in 2007.

"Those of us who make a living from the land consider eminent domain — at best — a necessary evil," Dierschke told the 2006 annual Texas Farm Bureau Convention as the year drew to a close.

Citing the Supreme Court landmark eminent domain case of *Kelo v. City of New London*, the TFB president notes Farm Bureau is taking steps to ensure that the New Jersey decision (of seizing private land under the guise of economic development) does not happen in Texas.

Dierschke suggests a constitutional amendment, payment of legal fees for landowners, relocation costs and royalties as ways to better improve Texas' eminent domain law.

He says steps, such as a constitutional amendment, would "make absolutely certain not one square inch of Texas land is ever taken away from the owners just because some taxing authority thinks a shopping mall or subdivision would produce more tax revenue."

In other issues, Farm Bureau will push for extension of the 2002 Farm Bill in the 110th U.S. Congress as long as the World Trade Organization continues to fail at producing tangible, positive results.

Dierschke notes Farm Bureau is proud it's a nonpartisan organization.

"We are fed up with partisan bickering; the reluctance to support good legislation, for fear the other party will get credit, is crippling the nation," he laments. "This must stop for the good of our country. ... It's time to lead or get out of the way."

The TFB president says the severity of the drought that

## Key Points

- Farm Bureau president says eminent domain top issue.
- Leadership of group calls for end of partisan feuding.
- Organization wants drought package to address major loss.

devastated many Texas farmers and ranchers needs to be addressed with a federal drought assistance package.

"The drought is a special set of conditions that deserves special attention," Dierschke says. "It is agriculture's [Hurricane] Katrina."

Some 968 voting delegates agreed with Dierschke at the 73rd annual TFB Convention in Arlington, supporting legislation that would require those exercising eminent domain to make a good faith offer.

They also want any condemning authority to pay attorney fees, appraisal fees and related costs whenever the offer is challenged and the amount awarded exceeds the initial offer.

Delegates also recommend

## FIFTH TIME:

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governmental review to determine the specific number and kind of entities that actually have the right to exercise eminent domain.

## Dierschke president again

In other action, TFB delegates re-elected Dierschke to his fifth one-year term as TFB president to lead the state's largest farm organization.

After the convention, the TFB board elected officers. Bobby Nedbalek, a cotton and grain farmer from Sinton, was chosen vice president, and Don Smith, a dairyman from Sulphur Springs, is TFB's new secretary-treasurer.

## Farm Bureau's highest honor goes to former Rep. Combest

**F**ORMER U.S. Rep. Larry Combest of Lubbock, Texas, was honored with Texas Farm Bureau's Distinguished Service Award at the organization's 2006 convention in Arlington.

Combest represented the High Plains region of Texas for nine terms in Congress, and was principle author of the landmark 2002 Farm Bill crafted in a bipartisan effort with former U.S. Rep. Charles Stenholm of Ericksdahl, Texas.

Combest, a Republican, served as chairman of the U.S. House Agriculture Committee, while Stenholm, a Democrat, was ranking minority member. Combest was committee chairman from 1999 until his 2003 retirement from

Congress. He also was widely recognized for his work on the House Intelligence Committee.

"Larry Combest forged strong ties with the Texas agricultural community," said Kenneth Dierschke, TFB president, San Angelo, in recognizing Combest.

"He worked continuously to serve the interests — not only of Texas Farm Bureau, and farm and ranch families — but the nation's vital food and fiber industry as well," he added.

The award is the highest honor TFB bestows, after unanimous consent is given by the group's board of directors.

The award is not given annually, but only to the most deserving candidates, Dierschke noted.

# February, March bring ag events

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## Key Points

- Texoma Farm and Ranch Show set for mid-February.
- Abilene to host Texas Farm, Ranch and Wildlife Expo.
- Estate planning seminars set for cities across Texas.

**A**S producers ponder their new crop or livestock year in 2007, some major events could help them in February and March.

The big 2007 Texoma Farm and Ranch Show is Wednesday, Feb. 14, and Thursday, Feb. 15, in Wichita Falls, Texas. The event is expected to draw another capacity crowd of producers and agribusiness leaders from Texas, Oklahoma and other parts of the country.

"We are expecting the exhibit area to sell out again,"

says Joe Raff, Wichita County Extension agent.

Raff says the first day starts with the traditional Growers Breakfast at 7 a.m. and continues with programs from top specialists and exhibit booths.

The second day starts at 8 a.m. and continues all day.

General admittance is free. For those seeking to get continuing education units, a small fee for paperwork is charged.

For more information, you can contact Raff at (940) 716-8610 or e-mail him at [j-raff@tamu.edu](mailto:j-raff@tamu.edu).

## Farm, ranch, wildlife expo

The 2007 Texas Farm, Ranch and Wildlife Expo is Tuesday, Feb. 20, and Wednesday, Feb. 21, at the Expo Center in Abilene. Like its name, the show includes the three segments, along with agricultural exhibitors.

The first day starts at 8 a.m. with Dale Rollins, Texas A&M wildlife specialist, San Angelo, at the Western Heritage Ranch House on the Expo Center grounds. Rollins is a top-notch speaker, who also writes a monthly column, "Wildlife by Design," in *The Farmer-Stockman*. Rollins will discuss "Setting Wildlife Management Goals," and then will moderate a day packed with many top wildlife experts.

The Town & Country Women's Fair starts at 9 a.m. on the first day in the Modern Living Mall.

At 10 a.m., the Rolling Plains Cotton Growers will hold its 2007 annual meeting in conjunction with this year's expo in the Big Country Hall. After lunch, Texas A&M Extension agronomist Billy Warrick, entomologist Chris Sansone and Jan Hatler of

the Texas Department of Agriculture will speak to growers.

The second day starts at 8 a.m. and is geared toward ranchers with Allan McGinty, Texas A&M Extension range specialist, San Angelo, discussing "Back to the Basics of Brush Control." Top speakers on range science and water will join him.

General admittance is free, but the special Texas Wildlife Association Workshop is \$35 if preregistering by Feb. 14, or \$50 at the door Feb. 20.

For more information, call Taylor County Extension Agent Gary Bomar at (325) 672-6048 or through e-mail at [g-bomar@tamu.edu](mailto:g-bomar@tamu.edu).

## Estate planning seminars

Texas A&M Cooperative Extension has slated farm and ranch estate planning seminars across Texas in February and March.

Wayne Hayenga, Extension economist, will give an analysis of relevant income and estate tax rules as they affect families and agricultural businesses.

"The seminar is offered to provide participants enough information on tax and estate planning matters to help them make difficult estate planning decisions," Hayenga notes.

The seminars include:  
 ■ Denton, Feb. 21-22, Denton County Government Center, 306 N. Loop 288, Suite 222.

■ San Angelo, March 6-7, Texas A&M Research and Extension Center, 7887, U.S. Highway 87 N.

■ Houston, March 13-14, Texas Cooperative Extension, Harris County, 3033 Bear Creek Drive.

■ Weslaco, March 27-28, Texas A&M Research and Extension Center, 2415 E. Highway 83.

The seminars will be held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, call Sharon Wehring at (979) 845-2226 or e-mail her at [s-wehring@tamu.edu](mailto:s-wehring@tamu.edu).



**JOE RAFF**



**WAYNE HAYENGA**

## Visit booths for chance at a GPS StreetPilot

**W**HILE you're at the National Cattlemen's Beef Association convention Jan. 31 to Feb. 3 in Nashville, Tenn., drop by our trade show booth to visit and register to win a Garmin StreetPilot c330 or an original pen-and-ink Rubes cartoon from Leigh Rubin.

The GPS drawing is sponsored jointly by Ridley Block and their Crystalix Brand

Supplement and Farm Progress. Two of these GPS units will be given away, one from the Ridley booth, No. 451, and one from the Farm Progress booth, No. 473.

The drawings will be in the final hour of the trade show Feb. 3. You need not be present to win.

The StreetPilot "c-series" GPS navigators feature preloaded street maps, touchscreen op-

erations and voice-prompted directions. Your route to any destination selected is automatically calculated and displayed. The units are portable and fasten to the windshield of any vehicle with a suction-mount cradle.

The Leigh Rubin cartoon print will be given away in the Farm Progress booth in the final hour of the trade show.