

IDAHO POTATO PULSE



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Government Affairs Report By Pat Kole

Next week, IPC, IGSA, and industry members will attend the United Fresh Produce Association's Public Policy Conference in Washington DC. In addition to the meetings with key agencies – USDA, FDA, EPA – we will meet with congressional staffers and our Senators and Representatives. We will also participate in the "Festival on Capitol Hill" where we will serve Idaho® Dehydrated potatoes to over 500 people – mainly staffer but also members of Congress as well.

Industry Relations Report By Todd Cornelison

A Few of the Topics Discussed at the Annual State Managers Meeting Held Last Week

E-Verify: Few things have the ability to impact agricultural work forces like E-verify. The good news is that we have most Ag industries on our side. United Fresh is leading the way in opposition of any bill that does not include a guest worker program.

"United Fresh strongly opposes any workforce legislation that does not include strong provisions for a practical agricultural worker program," said United Fresh Senior Vice President of Public Policy Robert Guenther. "Without an agricultural worker program, this legislation threatens the viability of fruit and vegetable growers across the country, and will have a significant impact on the entire fresh produce marketing chain."

Now for the reality: Every time we speak with our Congressional delegates, we are told that for every voice they hear against E-Verify, they hear 10 for E-verify. As agricultural employers, we know the truth behind the jobs we provide; they just aren't being taken up by the local workforce. As a general rule, migrant workers tend to be the only employees interested in our jobs. However, proponents of immigration legislation are doing a better job of getting their voices across, and with the high unemployment rate, their story is quite a n easy sale: "Don't let the migrant labor force take our jobs." That added with the benefits to National Security, make their stance quite popular.

Where we stand today: The House just passed a bill that includes E-Verify and doesn't have any provision for a guest worker program. Despite all of our efforts and even a last minute attempt to get a guest worker program attached to the bill, we failed. The good news is that the bill has a very slim chance of passing the Senate, so we have time to re-group and try again.

E-Verify is a big topic of the upcoming United Fresh Public Policy Conference which is being held in DC next week. We will be there in full force along with the rest of the nation's Ag leaders to again tell our Congressional leaders that immigration legislation without a guest worker program will cripple this nation's Ag industry.

Are you doing your part? We need to take every opportunity to inform the non-Ag public that their food supply could be in real jeopardy if immigration legislation continues to take the path it is on. Use all of your influence to reach out and inform people that our stance is not only justifiable but necessary.

USDA Proposed School Lunch Menu Changes: On Wednesday, October 5, the National Potato Council will host a n educational luncheon at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., to draw public attention to the potential health and economic impacts of USDA's pending school meal regulations.

The open-press event, entitled USDA's Proposed School Meal Rules Make No Sense, will bring together national and local media, policy makers, nutrition experts and school foodservice personnel to voice support for the continued availability of potatoes and other vegetables students regularly eat and enjoy, while keeping costs to a minimum. NPC will also release the results from a national survey of school foodservice officials on their perceptions of the impact of these new rules.

We anticipate up to four Members of Congress to co-host the event and describe how the proposed rules will impact their constituents.

In the end, the goal of events like this one, and more to come, is to motivate local activists to go to the online toolkit at www.PotatoesInSchools.com, where they can download template letters to send to the media and the USDA. Even though the comment period is closed, citizens need to know that it's never too late to communicate to the USDA.

Calendar

October

- 3-5 United Fresh Public Policy Conference, Washington DC
- 8 NASS Report Winter Potato Acreage and Production
- 26-27 USPB Dehy Industry Meeting, Boise, ID

November

- 1-2 IPC Meeting, Moscow, ID
- 1 United of Idaho Board Meeting, Idaho Falls, ID
- 9 NASS Report Fall Potato Acreage and Production
- 15-17 IPC Whistlestop Tour
- 16 IGSA Fall Meeting/IPC Whistlestop Tour, 6:00 p.m., Hilton Garden Inn, Idaho Falls, ID