



Illinois Fertilizer & Chemical Association's "News Under the Dome"



Calendar Info

- IFCA Convention, Jan 28-30, in Peoria, Illinois.
- AG-SOLVE PAC Auction, Jan 29, 3:45pm in Peoria.
- Ag Retailers DC Fly-in, Feb 3-6, 2019
- IFCA's Legislative Breakfast in Springfield, March 21, 7:30am

IFCA News on Facebook and Twitter.

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Senate and House Overwhelmingly Passes 2018 Farm Bill

The Senate and House this week voted overwhelmingly to approve an \$867 billion farm bill, as Congress appeared poised to pass legislation that will help an agriculture industry battered by President Trump's trade war.

In an 87 to 13 vote, the Senate approved legislation that allocates billions of dollars in subsidies to American farmers, legalizes hemp, bolsters farmer's markets and rejects stricter limits on food stamps pushed by House Republicans. The House passed the farm bill on the very next day on a 369-47 vote. It now moves to President Trump for his signature. IFCA expects him to sign the bill.

Congressional negotiators said they faced increasing pressure to complete the bill from farmers who have suffered steep declines in commodities prices amid Trump's ongoing trade war with China.

Some in the ag input industry are happy to see the farm bill pass but think it was a lost opportunity to pass common sense regulatory reforms that wouldn't have had any budgetary impacts.

Two key issues that were not included in the final farm bill language that IFCA were supporting was the Pesticide Registration and Improvement Act (PRIA) and language for codification of the exemption for ag retailers on OSHA's Process Safety Management Standards.

PRIA establish a new section of FIFRA, which put in place a fee schedule for pesticide registration requests. It lists specific decision time periods for EPA to make regu-

latory decision on pesticide registration and tolerance actions submitted to the Agency. The goal of PRIA was to create a more predictable and effective evaluation scheme for affected pesticide decisions and couple the collection of individual fees with specific decision review periods. It was promoted shorter decision review periods for reduced risk applications. This legislation was a key provisions for agricultural retailers.

Regarding the PSM issue, IFCA was supporting a proposed statutory definition of what constitutes a 'retailer'. This language was included in the House bill but dropped in conference. This provision was necessary to prevent arbitrary re-definitions of 'retailer' by regulatory agencies, which was the mechanism the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) attempted to use to impose Process Safety Management (PSM) on anhydrous ammonia fertilizer retailers. OSHA's stated justification for trying to impose PSM was the 2013 tragedy in West, Texas, where anhydrous ammonia was present but played no role whatsoever in the explosion, even by OSHA's own admission.

Language that was included in the bill that is helpful to the ag input industry was the streamlining of the certification program to become a Technical Service Provider (TSP).



Funding Coming for LaGrange Lock Improvements

At the end of November, U.S. Rep. Darin LaHood announced that the Trump administration will provide the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with \$57.5 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 funding to continue major rehabilitation work at the LaGrange Lock and Dam (Versailles, IL) located on the Illinois River south of Beardstown, IL in Cass County.

The lock and dam systems on the Illinois River are critically important in getting crop inputs to ag retailers. Rehabilitation projects like this are much needed to ensure products can move effectively and efficiently around the world .

The LaGrange Lock is the southernmost lock on the Illinois River and accommodates a heavy amount of barge traffic, the majority of which includes agricultural commodities. It was placed into service in 1939 and currently requires major rehabilitation of concrete, electrical, and mechanical systems. The lock last underwent major rehabilitation work in 1988.



Illinois General Assembly Wraps up Veto Session

Members of the Illinois House and Senate completed the fall veto session on Thursday, Nov. 30, overriding Gov. Bruce Rauner's decision on numerous pieces of legislation.

Families of those killed by Legionnaires' Disease at a state-run veterans home in Quincy can now receive settlements up to \$2 million after lawmakers voted to remove the previous \$100,000 cap on Court of Claims judgments. There are 12 pending negligence lawsuits against the state that will be retroactively affected.

The veto override requirement of 71 votes was narrowly met after heated remarks on the House floor caused a stir. Democratic state Rep. Stephanie Kifowit—referring to Republican state Rep. Peter Breen, who opposed the legislation—said: "I'd like to make him a broth of legionella and pump it into the water system of his loved one, so that they can be infected, they can be mistreated, they can sit and suffer by getting aspirin instead of being properly treated, and ultimately die." Breen responded by cursing at Kifowit, who later apologized for her remarks.

The General Assembly also voted in favor of restoring a parole system in Illinois, which has not existed since the 1970s.

The bill allows people who have served 10 years of their sentence for a crime not including first-degree murder or predatory sexual assault of a child committed when they were under the age of 21—to appeal for parole. Those who commit aggravated criminal sexual assault may be eligible after serving 20 years. The measure does not guarantee parole, which is determined by the state's Prison Review Board.

Another piece of criminal justice legislation tightening restrictions on the use of jailhouse informants also passed. The measure, which aims to keep innocent people out of prison, requires reliability hearings for informants in cases of murder, sexual assault, and arson. According to the Illinois Innocence Project, the state has a history of wrongful conviction, with at least 17 people incarcerated based on faulty jailhouse informant testimony.

Not all override attempts were successful. The so-called "Tobacco 21" bill which would raise the legal age to buy cigarettes and other tobacco-related products including vaping materials narrowly passed the Senate, but fell short in the House. The bill received 62 "yes" votes, but needed 71 to override.

Some other high-profile bills were not called for an override vote. One would raise the minimum salary for Illinois school teachers to \$40,000 by the 2022-2023 school year. The current minimum salary for teachers, which was set 38 years ago, is \$9,000.

Another piece of legislation would have prohibited employers from asking for an applicant's salary history. The measure was meant to combat gender pay inequality. New versions of both bills, as well as the Tobacco 21 legislation, are expected to be introduced when the 101st General Assembly convenes in January.



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If you have any questions
regarding the AG-SOLVE
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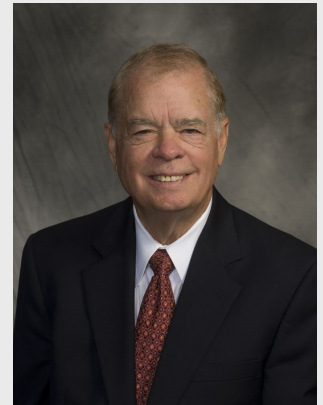


Former U.S. Secretary of Ag John Block to Speak at AG-SOLVE Breakfast on January 29th.

AG-SOLVE is excited to announce that former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture John Block will be speaking at the AG-SOLVE breakfast on January 29th at 7:15. Secretary Block will give us an update on what's going on in Washington, his thoughts on the Farm Bill and what will happen in the next two years in DC to the run-up of the 2020 presidential election.

He was tapped by President Reagan to serve as the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture from 1981-1985. Before that, Secretary Block was the Illinois Director of Agriculture. John grew up Knoxville, Illinois, where he still farms to this day.

Please sign up for the AG-SOLVE breakfast on the IFCA web site at www.ifca.com. If you have further questions do not hesitate to call KJ at the office.



The 4th Annual AG-SOLVE PAC Auction is Just Around the Corner

Once again this year at the IFCA convention, the AG-SOLVE PAC will hold its auction to raise funds for use in our state advocacy effort. This year's live and silent auctions are shaping up to be the best yet. AG-SOLVE has already secured some great live auction items. We would like to thank all the companies for their generous gift. More live and silent auction items will be added soon. The auction will be January 29th at 3:45 p.m. on the auction convention floor. Former State Senator John Sullivan will be our auctioneer. Come ready to bid!



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