

Who will serve on the House Agriculture Committee?

It's still too early to tell whether or not members will win their favorite committees, but you will likely see a lot of new faces when the House Agriculture Committee convenes next year. Fifteen out of 28 Democrats on the Agriculture Committee lost their re-election bids and the outcome for Rep. Costa in California is still uncertain.

On the Republican side, Kansas Rep. Jerry Moran ran for Senate and won. Seventeen of the 18 GOP members could be coming back, however, there are expected to be many vacancies as current GOP members move to other committees like Ways & Means or Appropriations. Many of the newly elected freshmen have already expressed an interest in serving on the House Agriculture Committee. Here's a rundown of the newly elected GOP members who might make the list.

Rick Crawford, Arkansas 1st. Crawford, an agricultural broadcaster, told *Agri-Pulse* his constituents are sending him to Washington, DC to "get our country back on track." Crawford, who will represent a farming-dependent rural area that stretches from the Mississippi River westward to the foothills of the Ozark Mountains, says he's been promised a seat on the House Ag Committee. He talks about his goals for the 2012 Farm Bill and the importance of passing pending FTA's with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea early in the 112th session of Congress in this week's Open Mic: <http://www.agri-pulse.com/Audio-Open-Mic.asp>

Kristi Noem, South Dakota's AL. The 38-year-old mother of three has worked as a farmer, rancher, hunting lodge owner and restaurant manager. Since 2007, she's served in the South Dakota House and as assistant majority leader since 2009. After knocking out the incumbent, Rep. Stephanie Herseth Sandlin, for South Dakota's at-large House seat, she's expected to have a high-profile position within the GOP freshman class. Noem says she would be interested in pursuing seats on the Energy and Commerce and Agriculture committees.

Stephen Fincher, Tennessee 8th. The seventh-generation cotton, corn, soybeans and wheat farmer, who never attended college and has never held elective office, captured more than 60% of the vote using the slogan: "Plow Congress." The 37-year old Fincher lives in the Frog Jump community of Crockett County beside his father and brother. "The Fincher Family," a singing ministry started by his grandmother, has performed at over 2,000 community events in the last decade. Fincher is interested in seats on the Small Business, Armed Services, and Agriculture committees.

Tim Huelskamp, Kansas 1st. After leaving his family's farm near Fowler, Kansas, Huelskamp pursued a social science education from the College of Sante Fe in 1991 and received his Ph.D in political science and agricultural policy from the American University in 1995. The Kansas Republican worked as a teacher, budget and legislative analyst, before settling back on the farm. This father of four served in the Kansas Senate since 1997 and won the "Big First" after Rep. Jerry Moran stepped down to run for the U.S. Senate.

Vicky Hartzler, Missouri 4th. Hartzler rode a GOP wave across the Fourth District to unseat Armed Services Chairman Ike Skelton, a 17-term Democrat. She, her husband, and daughter

farm near Harrisonville, Missouri, where they also own two Case-IH farm equipment dealerships. Hartzler taught school and served from 1995-2001 as a Missouri House member. With her largely agricultural district including Fort Leonard Wood and Whiteman Air Force Base, she is interested in serving on both Agriculture and the Armed Services committees.

Bob Gibbs, Ohio 22. Republican Bob Gibbs raises corn, soybeans and owns a property management company near Lakeville, Ohio. The well-known state legislator defeated Rep. Zack Space in this mostly rural district which covers eastern and southern Ohio. With his background as a farmer and small-business owner, Gibbs says he hopes to serve on the Agriculture and Energy and Commerce committees. His resume is filled with ag affiliations, including serving as President of the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation, board member of the Ohio Cooperative Council, President of the Holmes County Extension Advisory Committee and supervisor for the Holmes County Soil & Water Conservation Service.

Marlin Stutzman, Indiana 3. As a fourth generation family farmer, Marlin had been co-owner of Stutzman Farms with his father since he was 17 years old. Later on, he helped build a farm trucking company and has a strong interest in both agriculture and small business issues. He served eight years as an Indiana state legislator and co-sponsored legislation offering tax credits to bio-fuel producers which helped to bring 12 new bio-fuel plants to Indiana. Unlike most freshmen, Stutzman will take office almost immediately. He simultaneously won both the special election and the race for a full term in the 112th Congress.

Cory Gardner, Colorado 4th. This state lawmaker from Yuma defeated Democratic Rep. Betsy Markey in her bid for re-election in what has traditionally been a GOP district. Gardner graduated from Colorado State University with a bachelor's degree in political science, moving on to law school at the University of Colorado to earn his Juris Doctor. Prior to joining the House of Representatives, Cory served as General Counsel and Legislative Director for U.S. Senator Wayne Allard. Cory has also worked for the National Corn Growers Association. A fifth generation Coloradan with family roots dating back to 1886, Cory still spends time working side-by-side with his father and grandfather in the family's farm implement dealership.

Rick Berg, North Dakota AL. Despite Earl Pomeroy's clout on the Agriculture and Ways and Means Committees, Berg ousted the nine-term lawmaker. The son of a large animal veterinarian, he grew up hauling bales and working with cattle near Hettinger. A graduate of North Dakota State University in agricultural economics, Berg has been active in the North Dakota legislature since 1985, serving as House Majority Leader from 2003-2009. The Fargo native owns a property development company.

Commodity groups plot 2012 farm bill strategy

Anticipating the phase-out or elimination of direct payments, major corn, soybean, and wheat groups will lobby for stronger crop insurance provisions in the next farm bill.

At a meeting last week in Kansas City, farmer-leaders of the American Soybean Association, National Corn Growers Association and National Association of Wheat Growers gathered to

reach common ground on farm policy principles and, where possible, on specific programs. They're also working to coordinate their outreach to dozens of new members of Congress.

The commodity groups agreed on the need for "significant" improvements in crop insurance in order to make it a more viable component of the federal safety net for agricultural producers. **"Crop insurance is one of those areas that we all seem to agree on,"** NAWG President Jerry McReynolds told *Agri-Pulse* after the meeting. NAWG subsequently held similar discussions with the National Cotton Council, USA Rice Federation and peanut farming interests in Dallas. McReynolds said it's important for mainstream grower groups to "build on those areas where we have agreement on, which are many."

NCGA President Bart Schott agrees. "We're trying to get some messaging the same even though we're three different organizations," he said. "We all realize how important it is to get the highest revenue coverage that we can get, not only for us older producers, but for the young guys. They've got to have revenue coverage that protects them when they go back into the bankers," Schott said. "So we've want to get that coverage up in the high 80s or low 90s for protection."

Fine-tuning the Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE) is a top focus for NCGA. The association is analyzing the potential budget impacts of county or crop-reporting district triggers for ACRE payments.

A more pressing priority for commodity groups is "educating" over 60 new Republican members of the House who campaigned on less spending and smaller government on the value of farm programs. **"Agricultural spending accounts for roughly one percent of the federal budget; that's part of our educational process,"** said ASA President Rob Joslin.