



NATIONAL GRANGE

OF THE ORDER OF PATRONS OF HUSBANDRY

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In annual address, National Grange President calls for fiscal responsibility, Farm Bill, agriculture education at all levels



BOISE, Idaho - On Tuesday, Nov. 13, National Grange President Ed Luttrell delivered his annual address, laying out priorities for the nation as viewed by the 145-year-old agriculture and rural America advocacy organization.

In his speech, given to a crowd of nearly 175 people gathered for the opening of the 146th Annual National Grange Convention, Luttrell focused on seven major topics.

Luttrell focused on issues of the financial health of our nation, expanding regulations that cost taxpayers money and create a business environment that cannot take risks.

Luttrell expressed the need for a Farm Bill, as well as continued safety testing for genetically modified crops but no need to label GMO products.

He also called for a re-evaluation of assumptions about education and inclusion of agriculture and vocational training at all levels.

Luttrell said the Grange opposes reductions of Postal Service to rural America and in a related rural access issue, said the Grange continues to support the expansion of broadband into rural areas.

In his speech, Luttrell stressed the need for Congress to get to work immediately to save us from the "fiscal cliff" and initiate measures of fiscal responsibility.

"It is long past time for our elected officials to wake up, to realize their fiscal responsibility to every American, especially our children and grandchildren," Luttrell said.

Luttrell said it is imperative that elected officials follow "four fundamental truths": living within our means is necessary for the nation to prosper; free markets work best to find solutions and provide the best services; Congress should do away with publicly-funded pension programs for elected officials, programs that encourage people to become career politicians; and economic markets hate instability, especially created by continuously fluctuating taxes and regulation.

Luttrell said the nation will "begin its journey back to fiscal health and prosperity" when politicians make decisions based on these truths.

Fiscal health also requires scrutiny of expanded regulation, Luttrell said, noting the "increase of economically significant regulations, on top of massive regulations already in place, is larger than the GDP of many countries."

"The high cost arising from these regulations is too often passed onto the states," Luttrell said. "However, it is often the consumer who bears the burden of any costly regulations."

Luttrell said the Grange supports "necessary regulations needed to provide reasonable safety and peace of mind to American workers, families and inventors. However, we opposed any regulation that seeks a zero tolerance of risk."

"Our great nation was founded by men who took risks because they understood that without risk, there can never be success," Luttrell said.

"While regulatory agencies continue to move to sterilize our environment and lives, Congress has failed to ensure the health and well-being of American agriculture by allowing the September 30 deadline to come and go without the passage of a 2012 Farm Bill," Luttrell said.

"Agriculture should never become a partisan football, as every American depends on agriculture."

He urged all Grange members and those concerned about agriculture to contact their elected representatives "in order to encourage them to pass the 2012 Farm Bill during the lame duck session."

Luttrell said much of the tension between consumers and producers, including the need for both large and small producers and the concept and practice of genetically modified foods, is

the lack of education related to agriculture.

"In order to spread the truth of agriculture, the Grange continues to call for wide-scale basic agriculture education at the primary levels and in post-secondary education related to agriculture production, research and policy," Luttrell said.

Luttrell said research is critical in regards to the safety and efficacy of genetically modified organisms, but labeling of such would be "misleading" and would falsely imply "differences where none exist."

Luttrell also called on schools to teach financial literacy and parents and students not to forget the value of vocational programs and need for trained tradespeople.

Luttrell said, "It is difficult for graduates to become contributing members of society while they are dragged down by a lifetime of financial struggle," by way of student loan debt and an economy that isn't creating jobs for many new graduates from four-year programs.

"Grange members stand in support of programs that teach basic skills in agriculture, metalwork, mechanics, construction and technology in practical ways," Luttrell said.

Because rural customers rely so heavily on mail delivery, Luttrell said it is imperative that Congress work to save the USPS by either eliminating the prepayment requirement for future employee retirement health benefits or by releasing USPS from congressional oversight so they may make decisions based on market conditions.

"A sustainable and prospering U.S. Postal Service is a must for rural America," Luttrell said.

Finally, Luttrell stressed the need for equitable access through rural broadband and noted that the Grange will work with legislators to ensure Universal Service Funds be used to bring that broadband to homes and businesses in rural America.

To see the full speech, go to the [National Grange's YouTube channel](#) or [read the transcript](#).

Established in 1867, The National Grange, a nonpartisan, nonprofit fraternal organization, is the oldest agricultural and rural community service organization. With more than 2,100 local chapters, the Grange has evolved into the nation's leading rural advocacy organization and a major benefactor to local communities. There are more than 160,000 members across the United States. For more information on the National Grange, visit our website at www.nationalgrange.org.