

Five Grangers from New Hampshire Participate in the National Grange Legislative Fly In

Bob Haefner, NH State Grange Legislative and Agriculture Director and Overseer of Hudson Grange led a group of five to Washington, DC for the National Grange's Annual Legislative Fly In on May 22 through the 24th. Participating in the event was: Jim Tetreault, State Master, from Winchester, Chris Heath, State Overseer, of Barrington, Arthur Merrill, State Grange General Deputy, of Antrim, Gloria Davis of Antrim, as well as Bob Haefner, State Grange Agricultural/Legislative Director and State Grange Executive Committee member.

Three of the delegation drove while the other two flew, all on Saturday. After arrival on Sunday, four of the 5 New Hampshire folks, accompanied by National Master, Ed Luttrell, spent much of the day searching for and finding the graves of 4 of the 8 founders of the Grange. These founders are buried in two different cemeteries in DC. The remaining founders are buried about the country, with two in Pennsylvania, one in Minnesota and one we are not sure of.

Sunday evening was the kick off of the Legislative fly in, when we were given a wealth of information about the next two days schedules, ground rules, getting around town, etc. Monday morning we were treated to a special tour of George Washington's home at Mount Vernon. There were Grangers from around the country. NH, Pennsylvania and Connecticut had the largest delegations and one from Oregon traveled the furthest. We did have folks from Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Colorado, Ohio and a couple of other states.

Monday afternoon the 5 New Hampshire folks met with the staffs of the both of our Senators. The State Master and I were pleased with the amount of cooperation that our Congressional Delegation displayed between its members, and the bipartisan-ship that takes place on non partisan issues that are important to New Hampshire. On Tuesday morning, after hearing a member of the banking industry speak, we went our separate ways to meet with our NH Congressmen's staffs before going to the AT&T Center for an update on broadband, and other wireless technology.

While we were with the Congressional Delegation Staffs, we lobbied them on several issues including: Changing the legislation connected with Obama Care that allows an appointed panel of 15 to decide what cuts will be made to Medicare that can only be changed by a super majority vote of the Senate. A Durbin amendment to the *Dodd-Frank Act* will eliminate

Interchange fees on debit cards. There is a fear that this amendment, which has passed, underestimates the cost of running the debit card system and will result in banks eliminating free checking, and free bill payer services. The Tester Amendment is bi-partisan and will delay the onset of the Durbin Amendment for 15 months, giving Congress time to understand the consequences of this fee being eliminated on retailers. There is a court order that requires all farms within 250 feet of a wetland or stream to not only get an EPA permit and a State permit to use pesticides, but to also obtain a Clean Water permit. The Clean Water permit is a duplication of the requirements of the EPA and state agencies, is a 60 page application, accompanied by a fee of course. This will delay, cost money and time to our farmers, and possibly cost crop loss from not being able to spray for pests until the new permit is obtained. The Grange finds this regulation to be unneeded and costly to our small NH farms. This court order will also stop spraying for mosquitoes and ticks. Legislation to overturn the court order is supported by the Grange.

The Grange also lobbied for the Delegation to be vigilant about one size fits all agriculture legislation. Much of the Farm legislation is intended for the big farms out west and is bad for our very small farms in the northeast. We need exceptions for very small farms. We are also supporting implementation of the recommendations of the Dairy Advisory board to help our struggling dairy farms in NH.

The National Grange is working with the NH State Grange to possibly have the Next Legislative Fly here in New Hampshire for the First in the Nation Primary.

Bob Haefner

NH State Grange Legislative and Agriculture Director