

Cultivator

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Farmers To Travel To Nation's Capital

Alabama Farmers Federation members anticipate finding a more favorable regulatory climate under President Donald Trump's administration when they attend the biennial Washington Legislative Conference March 7-10.

The Federation's Mitt Walker said farmers are hopeful Trump and the 115th Congress will promote policies favorable to agricultural and rural communities, and he anticipates regulatory reform and the farm bill will be main topics of conversation during the conference.

"Our farmers plan to discuss a number of issues with legislators and agency officials while we're in Washington," said Walker, Federation National Legislative Programs director. "They're especially interested in hearing from U.S. Rep Mike Conaway (R-TX), chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture, during the opening breakfast."

The conference will include a visit to the British Embassy for attendees. For the first time, the event will feature a moonlight tour of major D.C. monuments following the barbecue reception on Capitol Hill Wednesday, March 8.

Farmers will attend breakfasts with Alabama's congressional delegation, and participate in meetings with key agency officials.

As the Trump administration continues to take form, Walker said he expects exciting announcements about other conference speakers and events. View the agenda and register online at cvent.com/d/rvq5hp.

Registration deadline is Feb. 9.

Cold Weather Strikes During Calving Season



A one-day old calf snuggles between snow-dusted logs at Paul Jennings Farms in Cherokee County Jan. 7, when snow and ice storms impacted north and central Alabama.

Photo credit: Moriah Jones, Cherokee County

State Legislative Session Starts Feb. 7

When the Alabama Legislature convenes Feb. 7 for the 2017 Regular Session, lawmakers are expected to discuss findings from the Joint Legislative Task Force on Budget Reform.

"Debates over budgets and gambling led to the formation of different working groups charged with studying issues and making recommendations," said Federation Director of Governmental and Agricultural Programs Brian Hardin. "We have been monitoring their work and developing additional background for our organization's policy positions."

The budget reform task force focused on five areas: unearmarking; tax credits, deductions and exemptions; the budgeting process; agency reviews and tax relief.

A bill to increase fuel taxes and provide more money for county roads is likely to resurface. Federation policy supports "increased and equitable funding for improving farm-to-market roads and bridges," Hardin said.

Suggestions from other task forces and advisory committees could lead to legislation related to registrars; water policy; and lotteries and gaming. Last year, a lottery was defeated in an August special session due to disagreements on how to spend lottery proceeds.

Federation priorities include preserving Alabama's property tax structure, including current use valuation for agriculture and forestry; opposing efforts to tax seed, feed and fertilizer; maintaining premium tax credits that encourage job creation and investment in Alabama; and securing funding for agriculture-related agencies and programs including Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation registration fees and career and technical education.

For updates throughout the legislative session, follow @alfafarmers on Twitter and subscribe to the Capitol Connection newsletter online at alfafarmers.org/about/sign-up-form.

A.L.F.A. Leaders Go Nuts In Dothan



Class IV of the Alabama Farmers Federation's Agricultural Leaders For Alabama (A.L.F.A. Leaders) held its second class in Dothan Dec. 12-15. The group of 17 A.L.F.A. Leaders participated in educational sessions, but also had some fun when they toured the National Peanut Festival Fairgrounds and the Alabama Peanut Producers Association office.

O B I T U A R I E S

William (Bill) Thomas of Lafayette died Dec. 16. He was 83.

Thomas had a certified TREASURE Forest and served on the Chambers County Farmers Federation board of directors since 1975. He was a past county president and received the Alabama Farmers Federation's Senior Leader Award in 2010.

Thomas is survived by a son, Ben Thomas (Susan), daughter Laura Gravitt (Randy) and eight grandchildren.

Ted Tindal of Greenville died Dec. 12. He was 71. Tindal was a member of the Butler County Farmers Federation board of directors and previously served on the Federation's State Greenhouse, Nursery & Sod Committee.

He is survived by his wife, Judy; sons Troy (Elizabeth), Clay (Amy) and Jarrod; and seven grandchildren.

Memorials may be made to the National Kidney Foundation or the Lymphoma Research Foundation.

Alvin Walton of Fayette died Jan. 6. He was 92. Walton, a U.S. Navy veteran, was a past president and vice president of the Fayette County Farmers Federation board of directors.

He is survived by his wife, Frankie Hocutt Walton, daughter Wanda Smelley (Eddie) and a granddaughter.

Bishop To Join College Of Ag's Hall of Honor

Colbert County farmer L.O. Bishop will be one of five inducted into the Auburn University College of Agriculture's Hall of Honor during a banquet Feb. 9.

The Alabama Farmers Federation, which presented Bishop with its Service to Agriculture Award in 2015, nominated him for the Hall of Honor.

Other inductees are Edgar "Eddie" Aldridge of Hoover and Benjamin Hajek of Auburn.

Agricultural Pioneer Award recipients Loren Aldridge of Hoover, father of Eddie, and James Helms of Montgomery will be inducted posthumously.

For more information on the event, visit tinyurl.com/17AgHallofHonor.

Deadline To File For LFP Extended To Jan. 30

Alabama livestock farmers impacted by the 2016 drought now have until Jan. 30 to apply for assistance through the Livestock Forage Program (LFP) after a recent deadline extension.

LFP compensates eligible livestock producers for grazing losses caused by drought.

While south Alabama is no longer in a drought due to recent rains, drier than normal conditions continue to impact over 75 percent of the state. For many farmers, rain came too late to help with winter grazing, so they are left searching for hay to feed cattle through winter.

To apply for LFP, visit a local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office. Find a local FSA office online at www.fsa.usda.org.

Federation, Alfa Offer College Scholarships

Current and future college students are invited to apply for two scholarship programs.

The Alabama Farmers Agriculture Foundation awards up to 67 scholarships of \$1,750 to students studying an agriculture- or forestry-related degree at Auburn University or Alabama A&M University.

Visit AlfaFarmers.org for more details. Application deadline is April 1. Scholarships are available to Federation members and their children.

The Alfa Foundation scholarship program will be open for applications Feb. 1 through April 1. One hundred students attending Alabama colleges, universities or technical schools will receive \$1,000 scholarships.

Visit AlfaInsurance.com for more information starting Feb. 1. Applicants must be Federation members.

Upcoming Agriculture Outlook Meetings

Attend one of five remaining Alabama Agriculture Outlook meetings hosted by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System for guidance on business management and tax implications in 2017. Registration starts at 8 a.m. at each location, and a light breakfast will be served.

For more information and to RSVP, email farmoutlook@aces.edu.

- **Jan. 19** - E.V. Smith Research and Extension Center, Shorter
- **Jan. 20** - Shelby County Extension Office, Columbiana
- **Jan. 24** - Black Belt Research and Extension Center, Marion Junction
- **Jan. 25** - Gulf Coast Research and Extension Center, Fairhope
- **Jan. 30** - Wiregrass Research and Extension Center, Headland

Upcoming Events

- **Jan. 27** - 2017 Alabama Farm of Distinction application deadline
 - AlabamaFarmCity.org
- **Feb. 3** - Registration due for Alabama Farmers Federation's Young Farmers Conference in Montgomery March 3-5
 - cvent.com/d/8vqfvc
- **Feb. 7-9** - Federation's Commodity Organizational Meeting in Montgomery
 - tinyurl.com/17CommOrg
- **Feb. 9** - Registration deadline for Federation's Washington Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., March 7-10
 - cvent.com/d/rvq5hp
- **Feb. 9** - Auburn University (AU) College of Agriculture's Hall of Honor Banquet in Auburn
 - tinyurl.com/17AgHallofHonor
- **Feb. 9** - Alabama Peanut Producers Association Annual Meeting and Trade Show
 - alpeanuts.com
- **Feb. 10-13** - American Farm Bureau Federation's FUSION Conference in Pittsburg
 - fb.org/events
- **Feb. 14-15** - AU College of Agriculture Spring Judging Clinics in Auburn
 - tinyurl.com/17SpringJudge
- **Feb. 15** - Federation's FarmPAC meeting and Taste of Alabama Legislative Reception in Montgomery
- **Feb. 15-16** - Alabama Cattlemen's Association Convention and Trade Show in Montgomery
 - BamaBeef.org

Jan. 31 Deadline For Open Enrollment

The open enrollment period to sign up for health care coverage ends Jan. 31.

Alfa Health is helping Alabama Farmers Federation members and non-members navigate health care reform and choose affordable coverage options from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama.

Many self-employed people, including farmers, may qualify for premium tax credits. Call Alfa Health at (800) 392-5705 to learn more about coverage options.

Commodity Corner

Greenhouse, Nursery & Sod; Horticulture

The U.S. Department of Labor recently announced a new minimum wage of \$10.62 for H-2A workers in Alabama. The 3-cent increase is part of the 2017 Adverse Effect Wage Rates for temporary or seasonal nonimmigrant foreign workers performing ag labor.
-Mac Higginbotham, divisions director

Hay & Forage

The 2016 drought proved hay & forage growers can benefit from adding irrigation to pastures and hay fields, allowing them to combat water shortages and enhance forage quality. The irrigation tax credit is available to farmers to help defray some costs. However, the extra cutting growers can achieve by using irrigation, in addition to improved hay quality, is the best reason to consider installing a system. Go to aces.edu/anr/ irrigation for more information.
-Nate Jaeger, division director

Poultry

On Jan. 10 in Dale County near Newton, Wayne Farms held a grand opening for one of the nation's largest poultry feed mills, designed to handle more than 25,000 tons of feed per week. Read the March issue of Neighbors for more details.
-Guy Hall, division director

Cotton

America's cotton producers are indicating they will plant significantly more cotton in 2017. After the outstanding cotton yields in 2016 for most regions and in light of lagging competitive crop prices, U.S. cotton growers collectively plan to plant over 10.8 million acres of cotton this year, according to the annual Cotton Grower Acreage Survey.
-Carla Hornady, division director

Wildlife Resources

Hunters are encouraged to record deer and turkey harvests through the mandatory Game Check system with the Outdoor Alabama app for smartphones. Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division representatives said they believe only a third of deer harvests were reported this year, the first season for mandatory Game Check.
-William Green, commodity director

Peanuts

On Jan. 5, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases released formal guidelines for pediatricians and allergists. The findings encourage parents to introduce peanut products, such as peanut butter and peanut powder, to infants to help children avoid developing peanut allergies.
-Caleb Bristow, division director

Cherokee County Spreads Christmas Cheer



In December, members of the Cherokee County Farmers Federation Women's Leadership Committee collected toys and food to help those served by the Cherokee County Crisis Center.

Chilly Day For ChiLLy Fest



During Linden's 2016 ChiLLy Fest Dec. 10, the Marengo County Farmers Federation (MCFF) competed in a chili cookoff as part of the two-day festival. MCFF President and Alabama Farmers Federation District 8 Director Meador Jones, center, is pictured with county Young Farmers members Rich Quinney and Billy Trotter.



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Tours Added To Young Farmers Conference

This year's Alabama Farmers Federation's Young Farmers Conference March 3-5 in Montgomery features a concert and workshops, but for the first time, attendees will also go on farm tours.

"We're touring some of the most impressive and innovative farms in central and east Alabama," said Jennifer Himburg, the Federation's Young Farmers Division director. "This conference is a great way to inspire the next generation of farmers."

A performance by country and Southern rock band Trotline will end day one, and a live auction benefitting the Alabama Farmers Agriculture Foundation will take place at the closing banquet.

The conference includes first-round interviews for the Outstanding Young Farm Family (OYFF) contest. At the closing banquet, commodity division winners will be named, along with three OYFF finalists, who will compete later in the year for over \$60,000 in prizes.

Registration closes Feb. 3. For more information, go to cvent.com/d/8vqfvc.

Madison County's McGills Are National Finalists



Stewart and Kasey McGill of Madison County, left, were named one of three runners-up for the American Farm Bureau Federation's (AFBF) Achievement Award contest during the AFBF annual convention's closing session Jan. 9 in Phoenix. The McGills received \$3,000 in cash and Stihl merchandise and a \$25,000 tractor from Case IH. They are pictured with AFBF President Zippy Duvall, 2016 AFBF Young Farmers and Ranchers Chair Cole Coxbill of Wyoming, Dave Henderson of Case IH and Roger Phelps of Stihl.