Greetings to my fellow Nebraskans! As you might imagine, fulfilling my national presidential responsibilities, it’s all corn all the time. I am pleased to be able to provide you an update this month on several issues of importance the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) is closely following in Washington, D.C.

On May 31, the Trump Administration completed actions to allow for year-round sales of 15 percent ethanol blends, or E15. The final rule from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) eliminates the outdated barrier that required retailers in many areas of the country to stop selling E15 during the summer months. The new rule allows E15 to receive the same summer volatility adjustment EPA grants for E10.

Corn farmers have been long-time advocates of higher blends of ethanol such as E15, touting its benefits to both the farmer and the consumer. This announcement was very welcome news and would not have happened without the steadfast efforts of corn growers. Thank you!

Unfortunately, this news was quickly overshadowed by a tweet from President Trump announcing tariffs on all Mexican imports beginning June 10, in an effort to stop illegal immigration.

NCGA is strongly urging the President to reconsider using tariffs to address non-trade issues. Mexico is the top customer for U.S. corn, with corn and corn product exports valued at $3.3 billion in 2017/2018.

Corn farmers want to continue working with the Administration and Congress to ratify the new U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) and pursue new trade agreements, but new tariffs threaten to reverse any progress.

The week prior to these two announcements, I had the honor of going to the White House, joining other farmer leaders for the President’s announcement of up to $16 billion in assistance to help farmers to make up for potential agriculture losses due, in part, to the most recent tariff increases and prolonged trade dispute with China.

NCGA is urging USDA to update the Market Facilitation Program (MFP) to factor market impacts into the calculation of MFP payment rates. NCGA analysis showed an average price loss of 20 cents per bushel from May 2018 to April 2019. These losses widened closer to 40 cents per bushel as trade talks with China lagged on in March and April of 2019.

NCGA looks forward to continuing our dialogue with the Administration to craft a complete package that will provide corn farmers with more equitable short-term relief while also supporting and expanding the market opportunities farmers need most.

Lifting the barrier to year-round E15 is one step that will help in this effort, but we won’t be able to reap the full benefits if EPA continues to allow oil companies to avoid blending biofuels in accordance with the RFS. Since early 2018, EPA has granted 53 RFS exemptions to refineries for the 2016 and 2017 RFS compliance years totaling 2.61 billion ethanol-equivalent gallons of renewable fuel.

Farmers across much of the country are struggling and NCGA is doing all that we can to advocate for opportunities for agriculture amid these challenges. Thank you for all that you do, I hope to see many of you in the near future!
Hello again, fellow corn growers.

Morgan said it was time for another newsletter, even though it feels like I just wrote a column for the last edition. With the Legislature wrapped up, I wish I had better news to share with you regarding property taxes, but as most of you already know we fell very short of what we had hoped to accomplish. One positive from this legislative session, is that we had more senators working together towards a solution. The problem was, there were not enough senators who were willing to support one bill, although they did approve adding $51 million to the property tax credit fund. The Nebraska Corn Growers Association will continue to work with the Ag Leaders Working Group and senators to find a solution for long term tax relief. As of this writing, I heard the House has finally passed the long-awaited Disaster Bill. Hopefully this program will give a lift to farmers across the state that were affected by the bomb cyclone and brutal winter weather. It has been a tough year for many of our friends and neighbors. There will also be the Market Facilitation Program later this summer. Although we appreciate this program, the Nebraska Corn Growers Association and the National Corn Growers Association still emphasize that we want trade NOT aid. The last crop progress report showed just how wet the weather has been across the Corn Belt, with many acres yet to be planted or unable to be planted. Like many across the country, our operation dealt with soggy fields, delayed planting, and some re-plant. As many of us try to finish summer field work and start irrigating, please remember to always take a second for safety. A shortcut is not worth life or limb. As I mentioned previously, if anybody has questions please reach out to me at (402) 641-7668 or contact the Association office.

Sincerely,

Dan Nerud
President, Nebraska Corn Growers Association
Legislature Adjourns Without Significant Property Tax Relief

The Nebraska Legislature adjourned May 31, on Day 84 of the scheduled 90-day session. They will reconvene January 6, 2020, for a short, 60-day session. This was a particularly difficult year from the perspective of agriculture’s top priority: significant property tax relief.

Of the 739 bills and seven constitutional amendments introduced this year, the Nebraska Corn Growers Association (NeCGA) identified more than 90 that had the potential to impact our membership. The Association supported 28 bills and opposed three. NeCGA board members, and/or an Ag Leaders Working Group partner, testified in numerous committee hearings. If we did not testify, we submitted letters of support or opposition into the records of public hearings.

Participation in the Ag Leaders Working Group continues to benefit communications among agricultural associations, particularly on issues we have in common. Additionally, our unified voice is effective when negotiating complicated public policy with senators and the Governor.

Regarding property tax relief, since 2016, members of the Ag Leaders Working Group organized and attended property tax relief meetings, with senators, K-12 educators, legislative staff and other agriculturally-based associations. The group developed and entertained multiple

Successes for NeCGA members:

- LB 103 (Linehan) Requires every property taxing entity to either lower their levy if total assessed valuations increase, or publicly vote to increase property taxes.
- LB 227 (Hughes) Public or private nuisances are better defined under the Nebraska Right to Farm Act.
- LB 284 (McCollister) Requires remote sellers (those without a physical presence in the state) and/or marketplace facilitators to collect and remit sales tax.
- LB 585 (Friesen) The Renewable Fuel Infrastructure Program provides grants to install, replace, or convert ethanol infrastructure at retail motor fuel sites.
- LB 663 (Friesen) If similar personal property is traded in as part of the payment for the newly acquired property, the Nebraska adjusted basis is the remaining federal tax basis of the property traded in, plus the additional amount that was paid by the taxpayer for the newly acquired property.
- LB 657 (Wayne) Aligns state law with federal law regarding the cultivation, handling, marketing and processing of hemp and hemp products.

continued on page 4
Property Tax Relief Discussions are Already Underway for the Next Session

(repeated from page 3)

reform solutions, while always referring back to the Ag Leaders Working Group principle: “to seek a more balanced tax system to fund education and other government services, benefit all property owners, include new sources of revenue or modify existing revenue sources, provide fiscal responsibility in government spending, and modernize our state’s education funding formula in order to reduce its overreliance on property taxes and still adequately fund K-12 education.”

The 2019 legislative session began by electing committee chairs and 10 days of bill introductions. While less than 10 property tax bills were introduced, it was clear that only two or three were meaningful.

The Nebraska Corn Growers Association, along with the Ag Leaders Working Group, strongly supported LB 497 which was introduced by Senator Curt Friesen. LB 497 would have increased revenue through the removal of sales tax exemptions, and then dispersed the additional funding in various ways through K-12 spending. LB 497 was never voted out of committee.

LB 289 was a comprehensive K-12 funding plan developed by Senator Linehan, chair of the Revenue Committee and Senator Groene, chair of the Education Committee. The bill was complicated and estimated the total annual property tax relief would be about $500 million. While LB 289 was voted out of committee, the bill never came to a vote by the full Legislature as Senator Linehan could not show the Speaker she had 33 votes to overcome a filibuster.

Finally, Senator Briese’s LB 183 would have lowered the levy on agricultural land from 69-75% to 24-30% of actual value for payment of principle and interest on school district bonds. It had advanced to Select File. In a last-ditch effort, Senator Briese amended the bill to also eliminate many sales tax exemptions and annually direct approximately $100 million in new revenue to the Property Tax Credit Relief Fund. The bill failed to overcome a filibuster. Senator Chambers and other urban senators led the successful filibuster. In the end, $51 million was added to the property tax credit fund through the mainline budget bill approved by the Governor.

Changing tax policy is difficult and messy, particularly when changes to public education funding are on the table.

This becomes a much bigger issue as we approach decennial redistricting in 2021 and the very real thought of losing two rural senators to urban areas. Know that your Association stands strong for the principals and interests of every member. Property tax relief discussions are already underway for the next session, and we continue to focus on lowering the burden on property owners!
The Nebraska Corn Growers Association invites all members to register for the 2019 Corn Grower Open! The annual golf tournament is a time for members of the association to visit with friends from across the state while spending time on the course. This year, the Corn Grower Open is being held at Meadowlark Hills Golf Course in Kearney on Wednesday, August 14. Registration will start at 9 a.m. with a shotgun start at 10 a.m. All local associations are encouraged to form a team and compete for the top spot and bragging rights for the year! Registration forms are due by July 26 and can be found at necga.org. The cost for a team is $500 and must be pre-paid. Questions about the tournament should be directed to Morgan Wrich, director of grower services, in the office at (402) 438-6459.

Interested in sponsoring? There are a number of ways for sponsors to get involved in the tournament, including hole and hospitality sponsorships. Sponsorship forms can also be found on the Nebraska Corn Growers Association website at necga.org.
Greetings, Nebraska Corn Farmers!

Aside from the wet spring weather and the delayed planting that impacted most corn farmers this year, I hope this letter finds you well.

It’s been a busy few months for Nebraska’s corn checkoff program. Because the Nebraska Corn Board operates under the State of Nebraska, our fiscal year ends June 30 and a new one begins July 1. Therefore, our board members and staffers have been busy developing a budget that will be implemented into this new fiscal year. Developing a budget is a massive responsibility. Each of our nine board members are also farmers. Therefore, we understand the importance of investing checkoff dollars wisely to align with our mission of promoting the value of corn by creating opportunities.

In a year where projected yields may be lower than the last couple of years, we chose to budget conservatively for this fiscal year. We continue to focus on projects that offer the greatest potential for return on investment. We also looked at how our possible investments fit in with our strategic plan and correlated with our four key pillars of market development, research, education and promotion. I should mention this is always how we prioritize how checkoff dollars are spent, but with the possibility of lower corn yields this year, we needed to be especially aggressive in developing a useful budget that benefits all corn farmers. That said, we’re excited about several upcoming programs this year.

In market development, I’m happy to share we’re continuing our grant program to help gas stations across the state upgrade to blender pumps. Looking at research, we’re investing in several research projects with UNL to help farmers continue to grow more with less and look at new uses for corn. Through our communications pillar, we’ve invested our funds and obtained additional funds from other corn states, including Iowa, Illinois, Ohio, Kansas, Colorado, Michigan and Wisconsin, to once again release an impactful nationwide Unleaded 88 (E15) campaign on the Big 10 network. Finally, in our educational efforts, we continue to support our CommonGround program to bridge the gap between farmers and consumers.

We also know we work better when we’re working together. That’s why we continue to partner with several of our long-time cooperators, including the U.S. Grains Council, National Corn Growers Association, the U.S. Meat Export Federation, AFAN and the Nebraska Corn Growers Association.

Of course, all of the aforementioned items are just snapshots of our extensive portfolio or projects we’re working towards during our 2019-2020 fiscal year. I look forward to bringing you updates throughout the year to better explain these programs to help you better understand what your investment in the Nebraska corn checkoff is doing for you!

David Bruntz
Chairman, Nebraska Corn Board
While May is typically the kick-off to the summer drive season, it also proved to be a great time to celebrate renewable fuel choices through Renewable Fuels Month. Several events and promotions were held throughout the month of May to raise the awareness of the different renewable fuel options and benefits.

The month kicked off with the 2019 Lincoln Marathon/Half Marathon on May 5, 2019. The event was sponsored by American Ethanol, which used the event as a platform to engage with runners and spectators about the clean-air benefits of using ethanol. During the event, the Biofuels Mobile Education Center trailer was on hand and served as an educational lab to explain the positives of the U.S. ethanol industry. RoboTron E15, a 9-foot-tall interactive robot, was also on hand to visit with runners and spectators throughout the weekend.

On Friday, May 17, 2019, the Nebraska Corn Board, Nebraska Corn Growers Association and the Nebraska Ethanol Board held a pump promotion at Casey’s General Store in Bennington, which is one of the first Casey’s in Nebraska to offer E15. The event kicked off with Gov. Pete Ricketts officially proclaiming the month as Renewable Fuels Month. During this event, E15 and E85 were heavily discounted (E15 for $1.88/gallon and E85 for $0.85/gallon) to encourage motorists to try higher blends of ethanol. Representatives from Nebraska’s corn and ethanol industries were on hand at each pump to help consumers fill their tanks and answer any questions they had.

Throughout Renewable Fuels Month, the Nebraska Corn Board partnered with television and radio outlets to raise awareness of the benefits of higher ethanol blends. Lincoln’s Channel 10/11 provided a weekly segment on its Pure Nebraska program highlighting renewable fuels. Additionally, motorists on their morning commutes in the Omaha and Lincoln markets likely heard live endorsements daily from their favorite radio shows, such as The Big Party Show on Channel 94.1, Todd and Tyler on Z-92 and the Froggy Morning Show with Gary and Nelson on Froggy 98.

The Nebraska Corn Board engaged with motorists throughout the month on social media, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. In addition to advertising upcoming promotions, the social media posts included ethanol facts, trivia and contests to encourage engagement.

Since 2006, the acting Nebraska governor has dedicated one month out of each year to recognize the importance of renewable biofuels, such as ethanol, to the state. The month is coordinated by the Nebraska Corn Board and Nebraska Ethanol Board.
On June 4, 2019, Nebraska CommonGround volunteers invited Nebraska Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) teachers to Shelton for their second Banquet on the Farm event. This hands-on learning experience allowed teachers to engage in conversations about the safety of modern agriculture. CommonGround volunteers are made up of volunteer farm women across the state who are passionate about helping consumers understand how food is grown and raised.

The event kicked off with learning opportunities revolving around different educational stations. The topics of these learning stations included animal health, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), production methods and sustainability. FCS teachers were able to hear from CommonGround volunteers who have extensive experience with these topics. As part of the educational stations, dairy cattle, chickens and pigs were also on display. Following the educational social hour, a buffet dinner was served featuring locally sourced foods.

“By reaching out to these FCS teachers, we’re able to provide them with the tools they might need to help educate the next generation of smart consumers,” said Deb Gangwish, CommonGround volunteer and farmer from Shelton. “We know not as many youth are growing up on farms or even in farming communities. Therefore, we want to bring agriculture to the students. What better way to do this than through their teachers?”

Throughout the event, the 76 teachers in attendance were able to visit with CommonGround volunteers about agriculture. By being on a farm, teachers were able to better understand modern farm practices, and they were able to ask questions to clear up misinformation.

“One misconception that stuck out to me revolved around the bad reputation GMOs receive, something many of my students are curious about as well,” said Louise Dornbusch, Papillion-LaVista FCS educator. “I learned that there are only 10 GMO products out there, and each one is modified for the benefit of the crop and consumer—not to harm them.”

While this was the first time CommonGround and Nebraska FCS teachers came together, the volunteers hope it’s not the last time. While visiting with the teachers, CommonGround volunteers let them know of their availability beyond this event.

“We know it’s difficult for teachers to stay up-to-date on everything, so we want to be a resource for them if they’re ever talking about food or food production in their classes, or just teaching about being a smart consumer,” said Joan.
Ruskamp, CommonGround volunteer and cattle producer from Dodge. “Our dynamic group of volunteers represent almost all aspects of Nebraska agriculture, and we’d love to be a resource for these classrooms.”

Teachers who attended the event are already excited to bring back what they learned to their classrooms.

“I think it was the best learning experience and social we have ever had in the 15 years of my teaching,” said Dornbusch. “It was just fantastic, beautiful, welcoming place and it was so neat to learn about these operations from CommonGround women. I’m truly excited to bring all this back to my students who really are hungry to learn more about how our farms and ranches operate.”

CommonGround is a national effort designed to help consumers base their food purchasing decisions on fact rather than fear. Nebraska was one of five states to pilot this program in 2010. CommonGround Nebraska is funded by the state’s corn and soybean farmers. For more information, visit commongroundnebraska.com.

“Each year, we try to focus on a couple of different production systems within agriculture, so our volunteers are well-versed on a variety of different issues,” said Harms. “Additionally, our volunteers appreciate having a media training component because so much of our outreach process is through television, radio and newspaper interviews, social media posts and public appearances. Having instruction on how we can best tell our agricultural stories makes our volunteers well-prepared to be advocates for our industry.”

Jeff Wilkerson is the new director of market development for the Nebraska Corn Board. He began his role on July 1.

He spent seven of those years as the host of UNL’s “Market Journal” television program. Most recently, Jeff managed communications with UNL’s Office of Research and Economic Development.

“I’ve always greatly admired and appreciated what our state’s checkoff programs have done to improve Nebraska’s number one industry,” said Wilkerson. “I am excited to join the Nebraska Corn staff and work for our state’s corn farmers to ensure long-term sustainability and profitability of agricultural production.”
TAPS Program Provides Opportunity for Research and Innovation

With tighter profit margins, growing social pressures for sustainable crop production and the threat of more stringent regulations, managing production agriculture has become increasingly more challenging. A program developed by Nebraska Extension aims to deliver an innovative way for producers to try new management strategies in a low-risk environment and achieve a deeper level of engagement among stakeholders in production agriculture – all while encouraging a little friendly competition.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Testing Ag Performance Solutions (UNL-TAPS) program is a farm management competition that promotes profitability and efficiency through peer-to-peer interaction. The competition is being held at the UNL’s West Central Research and Extension Center (WCREC) in North Platte. Unlike a common yield contest, TAPS teams compete for three possible awards with first prize for top profitability, followed by highest water and nitrogen use efficiency and a third prize for greatest grain yield. Participants are responsible for decisions including hybrid selection and seeding rate, irrigation, insurance selection, marketing strategy and fertilizer management. Each team’s decisions are made utilizing an online portal and are implemented in the field on three randomized plots.

Partnerships with a number of ag technology providers allow competitors the opportunity to try new and emerging technologies such as sensors and imagery, to aid their decision-making process in real-time. Although disguised as a competition, the randomized plot design of the program allows data collected to be used to study the reliability of these tools, as well as validate management practices and recommendations.

What started simply as a new way to engage with producers, TAPS has attracted interest from a number of partners ranging from ag service providers to regulatory agencies and financial institutions. Currently in its third year, widespread support has allowed the program to expand its competitive offerings. Originally just a sprinkler irrigated corn competition, TAPS has grown to add a second crop, sorghum, and launch a new subsurface drip irrigation corn competition. Over 150 participants in 50 teams are signed up to compete in this year’s competitions.

As said by Dwight D. Eisenhower, “farming looks mighty easy when your plow is a pencil and you’re a thousand miles from the cornfield.” Although primarily targeting crop producers, the TAPS competition offers a unique chance for those not otherwise involved in day-to-day crop management to gain a better understanding of the complex decisions producers must make when growing a crop. Teams from the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality and Nebraska Department of Natural Resources competed alongside producers in 2018. Inclusion of these teams sparked valuable discussion between producers and regulatory agencies on identifying win-win solutions for more environmentally and economically sustainable agricultural production.

The program will be featured at the West Central Water and Crops Field Day on August 22 at the WCREC in North Platte. For more information visit www.taps.unl.edu or follow the program on Twitter @UNL_TAPS.

The UNL TAPS program is supported by the Nebraska Corn Board’s initiative to ensure sustainability through research-based innovations that will increase production efficiency and profitability, while safeguarding natural resources.
Seven College Students Taking Part in Summer Internships Sponsored by Nebraska Corn

Seven students from various colleges and universities are involved in summer internship programs supported by the Nebraska Corn Board and the Nebraska Corn Growers Association. Although these internships vary in scope and location, each is designed to provide students with an overview of Nebraska’s corn industry through real-world professional examples and experiences.

“Nebraska Corn’s internship program has been a great way to provide college students with real-world experiences in the agricultural industry,” said Kelly Brunskhorst, executive director of the Nebraska Corn Board and the Nebraska Corn Growers Association. “Through seven different internship experiences, we’re able to help students see how vast our state’s corn industry can be. We know our students are the next generation of our industry, so we want to be sure to expose them to important topics such as policy, promotion, communication and international trade.”

Five of the seven internships are located outside of Nebraska and last throughout the summer. These five internships are with cooperating partners of the Nebraska Corn Board. The National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) is hosting two of the interns. Alyssa Jones is majoring in communication studies and political science at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL). She is interning with the NCGA office in Washington, D.C. Emily Keiser is interning with the NCGA office in St. Louis, Missouri. Keiser is majoring in agricultural education, communication and leadership at South Dakota State University.

Amanda Kowalewski is interning with the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF) in Denver, Colorado. Kowalewski is majoring in agricultural economics at UNL.

Two students are interning with the U.S. Grains Council. Cheyenne Gerlach is working at the international headquarters in Washington, D.C., and Sierra Richey is gaining international experience in the Panama City office. Gerlach is studying integrated sciences at UNL and Richey is majoring in international business and Spanish at Nebraska Wesleyan University.

Two of the internships are year-long experiences and are located in Lincoln, Nebraska. Isabelle Stewart is an agricultural education major at UNL and is interning with the Nebraska Corn Board. Morgan Leefers is majoring in agricultural business at UNL and works with the Nebraska Corn Growers Association. Both internships assist with the coordination of communications and promotional efforts with their respective organization.

In addition to the students gaining real-world experiences throughout the summer and helping fulfill the duties and missions of their respective organizations, the interns are also able to gain valuable insight on possible future careers.

Each intern will document their learning experiences through progress updates and social media posts. To keep up with the students throughout the summer, visit nebraskacorn.gov or follow the Nebraska Corn Board on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube.
Nebraska Corn Growers Association
4435 "O" St., Ste. 210
Lincoln, NE 68510

Trade matters to Nebraska’s corn farmers.

95% of the world’s population lives outside the U.S.

Top 5 export markets for U.S. corn
MEXICO • JAPAN • COLOMBIA • SOUTH KOREA • PERU

Exports account for 38% of annual farm cash receipts.
1 in 3 bushels of U.S. corn is exported in some form.
Red meat exports add 45¢ per bushel to the price of corn.
The U.S. exports ethanol to 77 countries.