Conf Call 5/22/14

Role Call at 4:00PM

**Hunter**:

House will not be releasing a paper until next week. Senate will release a paper. A report that goes with the bill just went out. Should get it around to us later today. It’s been a really good week for us. Unfortunately the full House appropriations committee did not approve what the subcommittee passed yet. Probably next week. Have to keep focus on it until then so no one tries to change it. They are working on waivers for the Obama school lunch program, which has created lots of activity/opposition from Vilsack and first lady.

House version added FSA staff funding back in (161 million/815 positions) + additional 27 million. Senate is biggest challenge. Full house and Senate need to agree to this. However, having it in the draft bill is better than not having it in the draft bill and working to change it. In both versions is language prohibiting the closing of any County Offices. We walked a fine line between supporting some closings but needing to have a plan. Some members of congress don’t trust the administration and worry we won’t see the plan. So while we tried to keep some flexibility, they were for a total prohibition. Also a prohibition from moving employees from location to location without approval. Probably won’t make them very happy but should bring them to the table to allow for a real discussion about how to improve FSA’s footprint and structure. In Senate, there is a requirement for them to conduct a workload analysis. It challenges not knowing what workload will be under new farm bill. Directs them to work with a third party such as National Academy of public administration to ensure the agency continues to provide the highest level of service. Requires quarterly report on workload analysis. This is a pretty impressive accomplishment for anyone trying to influence the process and good for NASCOE. Hope this moves quickly through the house and Senate. With it being third week of May and having them close to done, they could be on the floor this summer. They will want to do some Approps bills and this one is easier than many others. Once this is public, we will probably hear from SEDs. Senate is very disturbed with Dept. about MIDAS. So they cut MIDAS from 61 million to 32-35 million and a lot of report language that asks for answers for why new farm bill program are not on MIDAS. We have been clear that we support MIDAS and want to see it through. However, they want a little more review.

(Wes heard through grapevine that ceilings that were supposed to go out this week were put on hold)

Discussion:

We know there are some members who feel offices need to be closed and NASCOE board agrees. However, we need to see the criteria. Everyone wants salary and expense money back. In order to do that we had to find something that congress would look at and I think we looked after the best interest considering we didn’t have a lot of details. Hopefully everyone is pleased.

We are ok to talk about this now. The information is out. Thanks to Hunter.  
  
 A note on prohibition on office closings, the Sec should be inviting everyone to the table to educate why the closing are important and collectively go to Congress and tell them why. Then we could get some language to allow for a USDA Plan, etc. But right now the administration doesn’t appear interested in that. This prohibition is for one year only.

One more thing to think about. Now that this is done, we should consider inviting Lucas to the National Convention. A letter has been hand delivered to the congressman. Hunter will make contact. Want to get it on his calendar.

Mark Dismissed all non-execs at 4:30PM