

## TGANC Areas of Activities

There remains no shortage of attacks on tobacco and areas of impact that absent an engaged response would have adverse impacts on tobacco growers and the industry at large.

- **Crop Insurance** – On a Monday in mid-June, TGANC became aware of the McCain/Feinstein Amendment in the US Senate debate of the Farm Bill that would eliminate the subsidy for federal crop insurance on tobacco. TGANC in partnership with NC Farm Bureau went to work in an aggressive fashion to oppose this effort. We assemble and equipped our two Senators (Burr and Hagan) with complete and accurate data and key points to use in debating this motion as well as defending our cause. On Thursday, three days later the amendment came before the full senate and was defeated 52-44. Tremendous thanks to our senators. But also, absent a strong grower organization in place, with key relationships to represent your interests the vote results could have been much different. And moreover, this is likely not the last attempt in congress to push for this result so we must remain in position to advocate for fair and equitable treatment.
- **Trans Pacific Trade Partnership (TPP)** – This is an ongoing trade agreement involving 16 Pacific Rim countries that deals with a variety of goods and products. Agriculture is a significant component of the trade opportunity. Economists have estimated that for US tobacco the TPP could represent a net trade volume of 30 million pounds or greater. Last year the Obama Administration, receiving pressure from its Secretary of Health and Human Services began an effort to “carve out” tobacco from the TTP agreement. TGANC was among several organizations that engaged to debate and prevent this measure. TGANC argued, correctly, that tobacco should be treated as an equal, legal and legitimate commodity along with the dozens more that could remain in the agreement.

Eventually we were successful in having the “carve out” attempt removed but the shift in tactics became a provision called “safe harbor” which would allow trade partners to leave out tobacco in any future agreement. What followed was a campaign to engage other commodities that their products could fall victim to the same approach if they didn’t stand with tobacco in defense of this discriminatory treatment by the Administration. In other words, potential trade partners that didn’t like pork or poultry for example could exercise the same tactic.

To date we have been successful at holding back these attempts against tobacco. However, the TPP negotiations are ongoing and so must our commitment to be included and treated equitably.

- **Attacks on Tobacco** – The practices of organized anti-tobacco groups is nothing new in America but the frequency of their attempts to expand in to more and more private places is. In just the past five years NC lawmakers have supported significant increases in tobacco taxes, raided the NC Tobacco Trust Fund for other uses, established no smoking in government and public buildings, and expanded the no smoking rule to include private restraints. The newest round of efforts is by local governments to ban smoking in such open spaces as parks and beaches. Recently the town of Wrightsville Beach, in an effort led by the California Surf Riders Association attempted to become the first beach in NC to establish a smoke free beach. The focus they said was based on second hand health concerns but truthfully it was rooted in the concerns about litter. Problem was Wrightsville Beach already had rules about litter and cigarette butts were not

being enforced. Obviously it is difficult to catch someone intentionally leaving a tiny cigarette butt as compared to seeing them actually using the product. The attempt failed 3-2 before the town council. TGANC was one of a few that addressed the public meeting in opposition to taking away an adult's freedom of choice to use a legal product in a courteous and polite manner (which is to say smokers were not helping their cause by leaving extinguished butts in the sand). The advocates went to work with petitions to have the ordinance placed on the November 2012 ballot as a referendum. The measure passed and it is now illegal to smoke on the strip of sand at Wrightsville Beach. So what will be next? Other beaches are attempting to follow suit. Beyond the beach will come no smoking in your own driveway or perhaps aboard your own boat if the butt is tossed overboard.

TGANC is monitoring all of these types of impacts and trying to be a voice of reason in defending the rights of those adults who choose to use tobacco products. Ultimately such policies impact the demand for NC grown tobacco.

- **Farm Labor** – The workforce to aid in so many aspects of a labor intensive crop such as tobacco has become a topic of daily discussion. From the negative media attention about how workers are treated, to the availability of qualified workers, to the aspect of wages, this is a serious topic in the tobacco business. The matter is compounded when it becomes part of discussion about overall immigration. TGANC has long supported achieving meaningful H2A guest worker reforms that addresses concerns the growers have expressed over the past decade. We have always understood that achieving any progress on agricultural workers separate from broader discussions about immigration is highly unlikely.

And so it is again in 2013. The NC General Assembly advanced a bill on immigration that is primarily focused on the law enforcement areas of illegal immigrants. Guest workers are certainly here legally. But the majority of our society does not (and will not) take the time to understand the difference.

One of the critical new rules that we have been successful in addressing is e-verify. Particularly the threshold that triggers when a small business employer such as the family farm must e-verify all its workers. The rule is based on the number of full time workers in excess of 25. We have included in the legislation the definition for seasonal worker as employed any number of days less than 365. But the language was modified to a period of nine months. This provision exempts such workers from needing to be e-verified. The legislation also addresses the concerns about temporary driver's licenses but that aspect was sent to a study for future action. The Governor vetoed the bill but the legislature voted to override that measure making the provision law.

**NC Right to Work State** – Additional legislation related to labor was a portion of the Regulatory Reform Act that prescribed that no labor union or similar organization could dictate standards or labor requirements in an agricultural marketing contract (such as a tobacco contract) that would exceed state and federal labor laws. This law ensures that potential costs associated with unnecessary contract stipulations can be avoided by farmers.

*These are but a sample of the activities TGANC works on each day on behalf of the best interests of our tobacco farm families in an attempt to aid farmers in their successful business goals.*