

IL Corn Growers Association  
Political Action Committee Newsletter

# Maize Matters



Above: Illinois FFA State officers and section presidents stand outside the White House on their trip with ICGA.

## BLUE JACKETS ON THE HILL

Blue corduroy jackets were hot and heavy in Washington D.C. during July, but Illinois FFA members said they were honored to hold the weight, responsibility, and privilege of representing agriculture alongside the IL Corn Growers Association (ICGA) in the United States capital.

For the sixth year, IL Corn partnered with Illinois FFA, inviting state officers and section presidents to Washington D.C. for the National Corn Growers Association's Corn Congress. Illinois' five state FFA major officers and 25 section presidents were given a voice alongside ICGA to discuss federal legislation impacting Illinois farmers.

"The people that I got to meet with were in favor of the Farm Bill," said Samantha Hazelwonder, Illinois FFA's Section 16 president. "It was amazing to see the amount of support that they have for us, and we have for them."

Illinois FFA's trip to Washington D.C. is one piece of IL Corn's partnership with the organization. In 2023, IL Corn committed to donate \$25 to Illinois FFA for each new ICGA membership. At this year's Illinois FFA State Convention, IL Corn was recognized as one of the organization's top Star Supporters.

During their time in Washington D.C., officers filled every moment with opportunity, visiting industry leaders, executive departments, and federal legislators. The



**(continued)** about the Farm Bill, atrazine, the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) tailpipe emissions proposal, and the future of the ethanol industry.

Hazelwonder said she was able to gain a new perspective during her first trip to Washington. "We got to meet with EPA, U.S. Grains Council, and a bunch of different people. Those (visits) were absolutely amazing to learn from their perspective," said Hazelwonder. "Not only that, but we also got to learn a little bit about the people speaking to us and how they got to those places, as we look into our future careers."

Although Capitol Hill was a busy place before August recess, blue jackets were seen alongside ICGA leaders advocating for legislative priorities in congressional meetings. ICGA leadership met with all 17 Illinois' representatives and both senate offices. Farmer leaders also built relationships with members of congress during the National Corn Growers Association "Farm Bill Frenzy" reception.

"Not only was our July trip to Washington D.C. successful because we advocated for our farmer members, but because we highlighted to the next generation, the impact policy plays in our everyday lives," said ICGA President Matt Rush, a graduate of Southern Illinois University Carbondale's agricultural education program.



Above: Rep. Mary Miller grabs a photo with ICGA on the steps of the Capitol.

"I love seeing the impact a trip like this can have on the future of our young leaders."

"I had never really had an interest in policy before, nor understood what it was. But coming here, and meeting with all these people has really given me an understanding that I think a lot of people should have," said Hazelwonder. "So, as I go into my future, when I see those things, I now will understand what's actually going on and how I can relate to it."

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## STATE BOOST FOR ETHANOL

The Illinois General Assembly's spring session was successful for ICGA as the state legislature passed retail tax incentives for higher blends of ethanol.

The ethanol tax incentives reduce the percentage of retail sales tax on E15 blends of gasoline by 10 percent; mid-range blends by 20 percent; and reauthorizes the 100 percent reduction of sales tax for E85. The tax incentives will sunset on December 31, 2028.

"We thank the Illinois General Assembly and Governor Pritzker for supporting the ethanol industry and corn



farmers through this legislation,” said IL Corn Director of Public Policy Brad Stotler. “We were excited to see the retail tax incentives, which have been in the works for many years, make it across the finish line.”

The provisions were initially introduced in legislation sponsored by Senator Pat Joyce (D-Essex), and ultimately included in the revenue omnibus package (SB 1963). “When the demand for ethanol-based fuel goes up, we see the demand for Illinois corn rise as well,” said Joyce (D-Essex). “This new tax structure will not only help farmers, but it is also better for our environment.”

## WINS FOR WATERWAYS

Illinois farmers will also benefit from improvements to the states waterways systems, as this spring ICGA helped break ground at a brand-new 1,200-foot Lock 25 near Winfield, MO. The river infrastructure improvements come after decades of advocacy, education, and diligence.

This important advancement would not be happening without the partnership of the Waterways Council, Inc, as well as the coalition members who have joined corn farmers in pursuit of upgraded river infrastructure along the way. Many thanks to the MidAmerica Carpenters Regional Council for their tireless advocacy for the jobs this project will provide as well as the conservation groups that joined our voices asking for environmental restoration to accompany this project.

“Finally getting to this point is cause for celebration,” said Matt Rush, President of the IL Corn Growers Association and farmer from Fairfield, IL.

“I am speaking for all corn farmers today – corn farmers that attended barge tours, that called their elected officials on this issue, that walked the halls of Congress with their association to ask for new locks and dams – when I say how excited we are to see this progress.”

*“These improvements then increase the U.S. cost advantage when shipping grain to China to an estimated \$22.55 per metric ton over Brazil by 2045.” said IL Corn Managing Director Jim Tarmann*

According to Jim Tarmann, IL Corn Managing Director who has worked on this issue for most of his career, “The U.S. currently has a cost advantage of \$5.35 per metric ton over Brazil when shipping grains from the Midwest to China, via the inland waterways system,” said Tarmann. “When we continue to invest in our inland waterways system, barge rates decrease. These improvements then increase the U.S. cost advantage when shipping grain to China to an estimated \$22.55 per metric ton over Brazil by 2045.”



Above: IL Corn celebrates improvements to Lock and Dam 25.



Above: Photo outlining the conceptual site for the LaGrange Lock and Dam on the Illinois River. Courtesy: Rock Island District



# C2A: EPA “BETS THE FARM” ON EVS

This June, ICGA asked for your help in a C2A challenging the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on their multi-pollutant emissions standards. The agency’s proposal would effectively require 67% of cars and up to 50% of trucks to become battery-electric vehicles by 2032. The ruling would hurt ethanol production and cost the agriculture industry an estimated one-billion bushels of corn from 2022-2032.

IL Corn prompted 473 comments from corn growers to the EPA docket, contributing to the National

Growers Association’s overall total of 2,882 submissions.

“Thank you to our members who submitted comments to the EPA, by sharing the devastating impact this ruling would have on agriculture,” said IL Corn Executive Director Rod Weinzierl. “However, this issue isn’t over. We need to continue to be a voice for rural America, and the impact this proposal will have on our farms and communities.”

The future of fuel has multiple avenues that can reduce the United States’ carbon footprint. IL Corn urges the EPA to think beyond electric vehicles and consider more than one transportation technology as our country moves towards lower carbon travel.

Does this proposal concern you? IL Corn points to the Next Generation Fuels Act as a permanent fix to the unrealistic standards set in the EPA’s ruling. Reach out to your Congressmen and share your support for the Next Generation Fuels Act! Co-sponsors include Reps. Mike Bost (R-12), Nikki Budzinski (D-13), Darin LaHood (R-16), Mary Miller (R-15) Eric Sorensen (D-17) and Senators Tammy Duckworth (IL-D) and Richard Durbin (IL-D).

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