

U.S. Rep. Conaway Announces Retirement from Congress

Friday, August 2, 2019

By Mary Jane Buerkle

An emotional U.S. Rep. Mike Conaway (R-Midland) announced on Wednesday in his hometown that after 15 years in Congress, he will not seek another term in the U.S. House of Representatives in the 2020 election.

Conaway served as chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture for four years, and was at the helm for the most recent Farm Bill – H.R. 2, the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018. He currently serves as Ranking Member of the Committee.

Although Conaway's accomplishments in agriculture policy are numerous, one that stands out as significant to cotton producers is the development and implementation of the seed cotton program under the commodity title of the Farm Bill, restoring a much-needed safety net to growers.

"Words cannot even begin to express the gratitude we have toward Congressman Mike Conaway," PCG President Stacy Smith said in a statement. "He has served not only his district, but all of agriculture with honor and integrity. Congressman Conaway is a champion for farmers and ranchers and we thank him for his tireless dedication and commitment to ensuring that agriculture remains strong and viable."

The National Cotton Council noted that Conaway advocated strongly for American agriculture in a news release.

"Congressman Conaway exercised valuable leadership in bolstering cotton's safety net because U.S. cotton farmers were being hurt by weak global prices and many were being negatively affected by multiple bad weather events," NCC Chairman Mike Tate said.

An accountant by trade, Conaway himself has said that he had much to learn about agriculture when he started, particularly in cotton. To say Conaway was a quick study is an understatement, PCG Executive Vice President Steve Verett said.

"Mike Conaway knew how to effectively represent his constituents, and he not only delivered, but went above and beyond not only for agriculture and cotton, but on a variety of issues that directly impacted his district," Verett said. "He has been a key player in developing and passing farm policy that is good for growers, and he formed relationships along the way that will continue to pay dividends on down the line to advance agriculture."

In a letter to members, the Southwest Council of Agribusiness noted just a few of Conaway's accomplishments outside of those within the House Ag Committee.

"The confidence and trust he enjoys from his leadership, fellow committee leaders, and his colleagues have allowed him to step into policy debates outside of the jurisdiction of the Agriculture Committee, to help press for H2A reforms and improvements, to ensure a favorable tax reform bill for

agriculture, to fend off attacks on appropriations, to ensure that environmental and energy policies are favorable to the farmer and rancher, and to make for certain that America's farmers and ranchers get a fair shake on a level playing field in trade. And, when farmers and ranchers saw a difficult farm recession made worse by unjustified retaliatory tariffs, he was a forceful advocate for the Administration to stand by producers with trade aid," the statement from SWCA read. "In short, we have so much respect for Mike Conaway and we thank him for his service and unwavering friendship."

"We will miss Mike Conaway in Congress greatly, and we wish him, Suzanne and their family nothing but the absolute best in his retirement," PCG's Verett said.

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North Plains GCD Makes Agricultural Demonstrations Accessible

Wednesday, July 31, 2019

By Julia Stanford, NPGCD

In a typical growing season, late summer is the time that research and demonstration farms host a mid-season field day to show off the crop's progress to visitors spending a day onsite. In an effort to make this content more easily accessible to busy growers, North Plains Groundwater Conservation District is bringing the information to you in a Virtual Field Day, available now at www.northplainsgcd.org/virtualfieldday.

Demonstrations taking place at the North Plains Water Conservation Center include population trials for corn and cotton, a comparison of center pivot to subsurface drip irrigation (SDI), irrigation management for a corn/cotton rotation, fertilizer management, and several soil health principles. See the crop progress and learn about the goals for these demonstrations by viewing the Virtual Field Day videos of your choice.

"We wanted to offer this information in a convenient way, based upon feedback from the board of directors, advisory committees, and the community. We're eager to receive any feedback on this new outreach program," said Steve Walthour, General Manager of North Plains Groundwater Conservation District.

Presenters for the Virtual Field Day are available for any questions regarding the demonstrations. North Plains Groundwater Conservation District's agricultural consultant, Nich Kenny, can be reached at nich_kenny@hotmail.com or by phone at 480-980-3592. Dr. Jourdan Bell, Regional Agronomist for Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service can be reached at Jourdan.bell@ag.tamu.edu or by phone at 806-677-5663.