

Spring 2026

NAFEC NEWSLETTER

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
FARMER ELECTED COMMITTEES**





A letter from *your* Executive Committee

Over the past few months, you may have noticed NAFEC has been quoted in many agriculture publications regarding the understaffing of our County FSA offices. These news releases and personal quotes from board members and former employees were not given lightly, but rather, they were based upon years of actual experience and personal hands-on knowledge of FSA offices all across the nation. We want you to know, NAFEC is doing all that we can to inform the public, to inform Congress, and to dispute the claims by the USDA that FSA offices are not understaffed.

As we have traveled across the nation this year, we have seen employees on the verge of mental collapse, we have seen PA's in tears because they just can't get the work done, we have seen good PA's with several years of experience leave for other jobs, because in their words, "the pay at FSA in no way compensates for the stress level". We have talked to FSA COC members, CED's, PA's, DD's, and producers all across the nation, and their message and comments are all the same, FSA is at a breaking point. Without additional staffing resources, the programs Congress has approved will be very difficult to timely administer. In many cases corners will be cut.

We have great concerns that this will include minimizing our County FSA Committees in an effort to get the work done more quickly, greatly diminishing the integrity of the work, resulting in errors, omissions, overpayments and in some cases even fraud. While some government agencies very well may have grown over the past few years FSA is not one of them. From over 9,000 employees just a few years ago, to under 6,500 employees this year, staffing levels have been greatly decreased. Years of experience and expertise have left the agency, and with the programs more complex than ever and the technology greatly lacking, a train wreck is on the horizon.

In addition, with staffing levels so critically low, there are now many offices across the nation that are only open a day or two per week. Paying rent on these locations that are closed most of the time is a waste of money provided by our American taxpayers. Producers are not receiving adequate service in these locations resulting in double work or poor quality of work. If the agency refuses to adequately staff these offices, for the sake of the producers, the staff, and our taxpayers, office closures will have to be discussed in many places that were off the table in prior years.

NAFEC is calling the alarm and want all of our County Committees, our FSA employees, and the producers we serve to know we are in your corner and will continue working to addressing these issues until improvements become a reality.

Sincerely,

NAFEC Executive Committee

Jim Zumbrink, President Ohio

Craig Turner, Executive Vice President, Texas

Jim Densberger, Vice President Nebraska

Bob Braden, Secretary/Treasurer, Iowa

Ronnie Wagoner Northeast Area Director, Massachusetts

Stuart Fitzgerald, Southeast Area Director, Florida,

Waylon Smolinski, Midwest Area Director, Michigan,

Theresa Whitney, Southwest Area Director, New Mexico,

Dan Noteboom, Northwest Area Director, Washington

Cole Sims the At Large Area Director, Louisiana



National Association of Farmer Elected Committees

NAFEC Legislative Report.

NAFEC has been working with a few County Committees that still don't have a State Committee. It is surprising that it's taking so long to get the State Committees appointed, which are an important part of the workings of FSA in each state and also supervise the County Committees. NAFEC is always available to give guidance to local County Committees if they have questions.

NAFEC continues to sound the alarm about the short staffing in our local FSA Service Centers. The workload continues to increase even though we have some offices with no employees that only open one or two days a week and many with just one employee. There are way too many here in Washington, DC that think; all farmers can just take care of all their business online. You know and I know it does not work that way.

NAFEC is keeping an eye on the effort to pass a new Farm Bill 2.0. The House Agriculture Committee after over 20 hours of debate passed on a bipartisan vote their version. Now the attention is on the Senate to see what they do. There's a new twist in the Senate, because of the War with Iran, the Pentagon is going to need more money fast. A few Senators are saying, they will work to attach an additional \$15 billion in Farm Aid funds as well as \$5 billion for specialty crops. I think the Senate will work on getting that done, then move onto marking up their new Farm Bill 2.0. There's pressure to get both done so we will see what happens. Whatever Farm Bill we end up with, NAFEC will work to make sure it is delivered by our local FSA offices and Farmer Elected Committees.

David Senter

February 1, 2026

Dear Administrator Beam:

The National Association of FSA County Elected Committees (NAFEC) recently met in Lubbock Texas for our semi-annual meeting. During this meeting, we had an opportunity to review action items that we had previously discussed with you both in Montana at the National Convention, and when we visited you last spring in Washington D.C.

We know many things have been difficult as a result of the budget challenges and government shut down. Hopefully, we are now moving into a more normal period where you know what the budget will be for 2026 and FSA employees are back serving our American producers.

NAFEC wants to convey to you and your staff that our upmost desire is to provide input and support for the efforts of the Farm Service Agency and our county elected committee system. We have the best agency in government and one of the primary reasons for the success of FSA are the grass roots, locally elected county committees across the nation. We also commend you and the Administration for putting together an outstanding staff at the Washington level, many of whom we have worked with for many years and have experience at all levels of FSA. We appreciate your desire to lead and will do everything within our ability to support your efforts in delivering programs to our producers, all across this great nation.

After our meeting in Montana, we were pleased to receive notification from DAFO that NAFEC would be included in quarterly conference calls with all agency associations. We know these were put on hold due to the government shut down but I hope that with the government up and running again, these conference call meetings will be continued, as originally planned. Somewhat in relation to the conference calls, we had also discussed with you the possibility of management inviting NAFEC and other associations to Washington DC in 2026 to discuss future plans and how to make FSA the best it can be. If such meeting is held (such has been done in the past), we would certainly appreciate being included.

Moving over to current COC elections and upcoming COC organizational meetings, NAFEC would like to request that you encourage SED's across the nation to remind their CED's of the importance in providing information on NAFEC, during their COC organizational meeting. Getting direction from the Administrator to SED's has in the past show to be a great encouragement to ensure states and counties follow these handbook guidelines. We would be happy to provide information that could be provide to State SED's if you so request.

After the COC elections are completed, we believe it imperative to have uniform training of COC's all across the nation. Both NASCOE and NADD are in agreement that this is a critically important element that was greatly minimized under the previous Administration. We believe President Trump and Secretary Rollins commitment to serving the nations farmers and ranchers can be encouraged, supported, and improved with highly informed COC members who have the ability to provide local input and outreach in their local communities for the producers we serve. Elevating the status of COC members by having regular training, regularly scheduled meetings and directives emphasizing the importance of COCs, is the best way to ensure we continue to have excellent candidates running in our COC elections and serving on our local committees. These committee members can also do much to encourage and support the mission of FSA in their local communities.

At our meeting in Lubbock recently, employees of FSA brought up a concern that we wanted to convey to you, as it seems like an easy one to alleviate. In recent advertisements for temporary positions State leaders are telling CED's that they cannot use any type of advertising outside of their local newspaper (if at no cost) or by word of mouth. This results in the pool of perspective candidates being greatly watered down. As such, we would request that CED's be allowed to advertise for these temporary positions using social media and any other type of available media platforms in addition to local newspapers (which in today's age, very few people read). We would appreciate you looking into this situation to ensure we get the very best possible candidates who may be available.

We do remain concerned over staffing levels in the local offices. NAFEC has been concerned about these levels for years but due to the recent DRP and continued retirements, levels are at a critical level. We have heard there are several offices with 0-1 employee and it is now affecting the delivery of farm programs. This is concerning especially with the farm crisis and need for the programs administered at the local county FSA offices. We hope that you can review staffing and start the process of hiring in these critical areas across the nation.

In closing, we appreciate your leadership at the Farm Service Agency and have high hopes we can work together to make our agency the best it can be. As future reorganization plans are developed, we would request to be included in the planning and implementation process.



Jim Zumbrink, President
National Association of Farmer Elected Committees

Response From DC To Letter

Sent: Friday, February 6, 2026 5:55 AM

To: David L Senter <dls@kscstrategies.com>; Beam, Bill - FPAC-FSA, DC <Bill.Beam2@usda.gov>; Graham, Kimberly - OSEC, DC <kimberly.graham@usda.gov>; Peterson, Steve - FPAC-FSA, DC <steve.peterson2@usda.gov>

Cc: Jim Zumbrink <jimzumbrink@gmail.com>; Jim Densberger <densbergerfarms@aol.com>

Subject: RE: Fw: NAFEC Letter To Administrator Beam

Greetings NAFEC -

Thank you for sharing NAFEC's perspectives and recommendations following your recent semi-annual meeting in Lubbock. We appreciate your continued commitment to strengthening the County Committee system and supporting the Farm Service Agency's mission at the grassroots level. Below is our response to the specific items raised in your memo:

1. Consistent Training for Newly Elected COC Members

We agree that uniform and comprehensive training for newly elected County Committee members is essential. After the completion of COC elections, FSA local offices will provide in-person training for new members using the updated FSA committee training materials. These resources are available to all county offices and will ensure consistency nationwide. Our goal is to equip COC members with the knowledge and tools they need to effectively represent producers and support program delivery.

2. Regularly Scheduled COC Meetings

We share your view that regular meetings are critical to maintaining engagement and transparency. FSA will continue to emphasize the importance of regularly scheduled COC meetings and provide guidance to ensure these meetings are conducted in accordance with established policy. This practice reinforces the vital role of COCs in local decision-making and outreach.

3. Advertising for Temporary Positions

We understand the concern regarding limited advertising options for temporary positions. Current policy restricts CEDs to using local newspapers (at no cost) and word of mouth. At this time, social media and other paid platforms are not authorized for recruitment. While these limitations remain in place, we will review the policy and explore options to expand outreach methods within existing regulations. We recognize the need to attract qualified candidates and will continue to evaluate ways to improve recruitment efforts.

4. Staffing Shortages and Budget Constraints

We acknowledge the challenges posed by staffing shortages, particularly in offices with minimal personnel. We are actively assessing critical staffing needs and exploring strategies to mitigate these impacts, including prioritizing workload distribution and leveraging available resources. While hiring authority remains limited, we will continue to advocate for solutions that support program delivery and maintain service to producers.

We value NAFEC's partnership and input as we navigate these challenges together. Your feedback helps us identify areas for improvement and strengthen the County Committee system. Please know that we remain committed to collaboration and transparency as we work toward shared goals.

Thank you again for your dedication and support.

Sincerely,

Trina L. Brake

Deputy Administrator for Field Operations

Farm Service Agency

United States Department of Agriculture

Farm Service Agency

1400 Independence Ave SW

Washington, DC 20250

(202) 341-5490 | 3095-S

COC Member Spotlight

Stuart Fitzgerald

My name is Stuart Fitzgerald. My wife, Stephanie Fitzgerald, and I are the owners of Stuart Cattle & Equipment LLC, doing business as SSB Cattle & Equipment LLC. We are a family-owned cattle operation based in Polk County, Florida. We have a 14-year-old son who is passionate about baseball and the outdoors. I am a pilot, and we love to travel. If we are not at the baseball field or in the pasture, then you will likely find us in the air flying to somewhere fun.

I have been actively involved in the cattle industry, equipment trading, and land preservation since the early 1990s, with over 35 years of experience. Before forming our current company, I was a part owner in another family-owned operation. In 2011, my wife and I established Stuart Cattle & Equipment LLC, which now operates multiple owned and leased pastures throughout Polk County.

I currently serve as an elected County FSA Chairperson, overseeing producer programs, and I am a member of the Florida Cattlemen's Association. I also serve on the Board of Directors for the Polk County Cattlemen's Association and act as the Southeastern Area Director for the National Association of Farmer Elected Committees (NAFEC).

Our company actively participates in multiple Polk County programs through the Farm Service Agency (FSA) Office, Polk County Parks & Natural Resources, the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), and the Best Management Practices (BMP) programs. We are Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) certified. We have successfully bid on and completed numerous projects on public lands for Polk County Parks & Natural Resources.



COC Member Spotlight

Dan Noteboom

This winter we spotlight one of our NAFEC area directors, Dan Noteboom who represents both the state of Washington on the NAFEC board of directors and the Northwest area on the NAFEC Executive Committee. Dan has served NAFEC for over ten years. Dan and his wife Terri make their home in Lynden Washington where Dan owns and manage a 4th generation family farm. Speaking of family, Dan is the proud parent of four children and five grandchildren.

Dan and Terri have farmed an array of crops including corn, bush beans, peas and sweet corn as well as running an 800 cow dairy of Holstein, Brown Swiss and Jersey cows.

Dan has always given back to his community. He has served on the FSA committee for over 30 years, following in the footsteps of his father who served many years and his wife Terri who served three years herself. Dan previously served as the President of his County Farm Bureau for 17 years and on the Land O' Lakes policy & resolution committee for 7 years.

Dan has a special place in his heart for young people and has helped support his local FFH financially, the past 27 years by providing an income generating corn maze for his local Lynden FFA. In summary Dan says "I'm happy to be a farmer and love to serve my community."



The NAFEC and Dillard Financial Solutions Scholarship **\$1,000**

NAFEC and Dillard Financial Solutions are pleased to announce that, once again, they are teaming up in 2026 to cosponsor a \$1,000 scholarship award. Many times we hear of our youth being referred to as “our future” or “leaders of tomorrow” when in reality, thousands of them in communities and towns all across our nation have been leaders in their own right for quite some time. We think they should be recognized.

If you are a current or past COC member and paying full dues as a regular member of NAFEC and have a child, grandchild or great grandchild that has graduated high school and is enrolled, or in the process of enrolling into an accredited college, university or trade school this fall, then they are an eligible applicant and you are encouraged to tell them about this opportunity.

The application will consist of a single cover page and a one page essay. Both pages are to be designed, created and edited entirely by the applicant. The cover page must have the following details:

- Full name, mailing address, email address, home phone and birth date of the applicant
- NAFEC member name, State & County where they serve(d) as a COC member and relationship to member
- Name of college, university, or trade school attending or enrolling to attend
- The field of study or degree plan the applicant plans to pursue
- A listing of the applicant’s involvement in service commitments to their community, civic, church and youth development organizations such as 4-H, FFA, Scouts, etc.
- Please note that on the cover page there is a need for a signature and date to certify with the statement: “I have personally prepared this cover page and the essay and I certify it is accurate.”

Because this is a competitive scholarship award, the one page essay will help the judges understand how the applicant views their experiences, personal growth, outcomes and achievements associated with the various community, civic, church and youth organization in which they are involved.

The NAFEC and Dillard Financial Solutions scholarship deadline is April 15, 2026.

Applications received after this date will not be considered.

Mail applications (Cover page and one page essay) to:

Tammy Eibey | 2810 Hwy 13 Ryan, Iowa 52330

All eligible applications will then be forwarded to three judges that will consist of a NAFEC Officer, a NASCOE/COOAC committee member and a Dillard Financial Solutions Representative. Each judge will rank the applications with one (1) being the highest ranked and two (2) the second highest ranked, and so forth through all the applications. The application with the highest cumulative scoring by the three judges will be awarded the \$1,000 scholarship. If there is a tie in scoring, the NAFEC President or VP will break the tie.

Because the deadline is April 15, 2026, we encourage you to pass this information on to any eligible applicant so they can start putting their information and thoughts down. NAFEC and Dillard Financial Solutions look forward to announcing the winner on July 30, 2026 during the NAFEC meeting and NASCOE National Convention in Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan.

The National Association of Farmer Elected Committees is a non-profit organization composed of and led by farmers, nominated and elected by farmers, and serving all farmers in each of the county USDA Farm Service Agency Offices. To learn more about NAFEC or to join, please go to <https://www.nafecfsa.com>

Dear Farmers and Ranchers,

We are proud to support NAFEC as the organization's benefit provider. Farmers and Ranchers are the backbone of America and here at Dillard Financial Solutions, we proudly support those individuals by supplying the most current information on your benefits.

Steve and Teresa Dillard founded Dillard Financial Solutions, Inc. in 1992, on the principle to assist a variety of individuals in understanding their benefits. For over 30 years, DFS has helped individuals, and their families make smarter retirement and insurance decisions. Our complimentary individual appointments and workshops focus on benefit education and shed light on how individuals can apply proven methods to achieve worry-free income growth and guaranteed retirement income for life.

Providing one-on-one, in-person, and Zoom/Teams meetings, for both individuals and groups alike, we would love to share our knowledge with you. If you would like to make an appointment, please contact us!



Thank you,

Steve & Teresa Dillard
Dillard Financial Solutions, Inc.



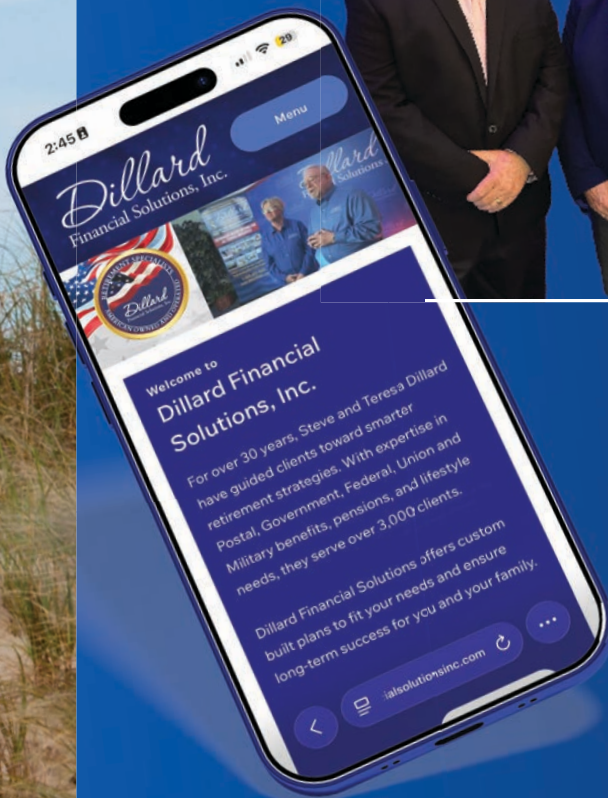
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SCAN FOR
DFS WEBSITE



1-800-692-7643
DFS@DILLARDFINANCIAL.COM

HOME OFFICE:
2381 Peach Orchard Rd.
Sumter, SC - 29154





NAFEC MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION (For New or Renewing Members)

Member Information

Name _____ Spouse Name _____

Address _____ Home Phone _____

City _____ Mobile Phone _____

State _____ Zip _____ Email _____

Employer _____

FSA County Office _____

Member Signature _____ Date MM / DD / YYYY

Select Your Membership Type: New Membership OR Renewal Membership

County Committee Member

CIRCLE ONE PAYMENT OPTION ONLY

Pay in Full Now

\$50
ANNUALLY

OR

Deduct from Payroll

\$6
PER MEETING

OR

ONE-TIME PAYMENT
\$250.00

LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP

Associate Member

CIRCLE ONE PAYMENT OPTION ONLY

Pay in Full Now

\$20
ANNUALLY

OR

Deduct from Payroll

\$1
PER PAY PERIOD

FOR PAYMENTS IN FULL OR 444 FORMS

Mail your check and completed NAFEC Membership

Application to: **NAFEC**
c/o Tammy Eibey
2810 Highway 13
Ryan, Iowa 52330

Membership begins after completed application and dues are recieved and processed.

For questions concerning this application, email Tammy Eibey.

tammyeibey@gmail.com

This form is available electronically.

FSA-444

(06-21-12)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Farm Service Agency

**REQUEST FOR OR TERMINATION OF VOLUNTARY ALLOTMENT OF PAY
FOR USDA FSA RECOGNIZED ASSOCIATIONS**

NOTE: The following statement is made in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 USC 552a - as amended). The authority for requesting the information identified on this form is 5 USC § 5525 - Allotment and Assignment of Pay. The information will be used to process an employee request to begin or terminate a voluntary allotment of pay. The information collected on this form may be disclosed to other Federal, State, Local government agencies, Tribal agencies, and nongovernmental entities that have been authorized access to the information by statute or regulation and/or as described in applicable Routine Uses identified in the System of Records Notice for GOVT-1, General Personnel Records, USDA/FSA-6, County Personnel Records, and USDA/FSA-7, Employee Resources Master File. Providing the requested information is voluntary. However, failure to furnish the requested information will result in an inability to process an employee request to begin or terminate a voluntary allotment of pay.

The collection of information is completed by current Federal employees and is therefore excluded from the Paperwork Reduction Act Requirement as specified in the 5 CFR 1320.3, and OMB approval is not required for this collection of information.

The provisions of appropriate criminal and civil fraud, privacy, and other statutes may be applicable to the information provided.

1. Name of Employee (Last, First, Middle)	2. Last 4 Digits of SSN
3. Home Address of Employee (Including Zip Code)	4. Name of USDA Agency (Including Division/Branch) USDA/FSA
	5. State/County of Employment

6. Association (Check One):

NASCOE NAFEC NASE NACS Other: _____

7. Type of Allotment (Check one) **Note:** A separate FSA-444 **must** be filled out for each type of allotment:

ASSOCIATION DUES

I hereby authorize the Farm Service Agency (FSA) all of the following:

- to deduct from my pay on a biweekly basis the amount certified as the regular dues of the Association or state affiliate beginning PP ___ of CY ___. Associate Membership ___ \$1.00/PP COC Membership ___ \$6.00/PP
- to make **any changes** in the amount which is certified by the Association or the state affiliate as an uniform change in its dues structure.
- to remit the dues withheld to the Association in accordance with its arrangements with FSA.

SUPPLEMENTAL INSURANCE COVERAGE

State: _____ Association: _____

I hereby authorize the Farm Service Agency (FSA) all of the following:

- to deduct from my pay on a biweekly basis the amount certified by me as the premium for insurance elected by me through the NASCOE authorized carrier beginning PP ___ of CY ___.
- premiums withheld will be remitted to the NASCOE carrier in accordance with the agreement between NASCOE and FSA. I understand that if my pay is insufficient to withhold the premium due, I am responsible for paying such premiums directly to the NASCOE carrier if I want to continue my insurance coverage.

I understand this authorization must be filed with the State FSA Office at least 3 days before the end of the pay period in which the first deduction will be made. I further understand this authorization will be terminated at any time I give written notice or in case of my separation for any reason. In either case, such termination will be effective only to prohibit further withholdings.

8. Signature of Employee Requesting Allotment	9. Date (MM-DD-YYYY)
---	----------------------

10. Termination of Allotment (Check One):

State: _____ Association: _____

I request payroll deduction for the following allotment be terminated on the first day of Pay Period ___ of CY ___.

NASCOE Dues Supplemental Insurance Coverage NAFEC Dues
 NASE Dues NACS Dues Other: _____

11. Signature of Employee Terminating Allotment	12. Date (MM-DD-YYYY)
---	-----------------------

13. State Office Action (Check NFC tables to determine current PP dues, or supplemental amount):

A. Date Received (MM-DD-YYYY)	B. Effective Date (MM-DD-YYYY)	C. Date Updated (MM-DD-YYYY)
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D. Name of Employee Updating Request	E. Signature of Employee Updating Request
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The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all of its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, genetic information, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Stop 9410, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call toll-free at (866) 632-9992 (English) or (800) 877-8339 (TDD) or (866) 377-8642 (English Federal-relay) or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish Federal-relay). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



A STRONG SUPPORTER OF NAFEC

Licensed Representatives for
Dillard Financial Solutions, Inc.

(662) 259-7001

dillardsouth@dillardfinancial.com

319 N. Lamar Blvd. Suite #202
Oxford, MS 38655



Brian Hayden
ChFC® MRFC®



Jason List
Federal Retirement
Consultant

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Our Commercial Insurance programs are tailored to the needs of HVAC, plumbing, and electrical contractors. With solutions for general liability, commercial auto, and workers comp, we ensure your business is protected with specialized coverage designed for your operation—again, all while removing overlaps and hidden costs.

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NAFEC Mission Statement

The primary purpose of the National Association of Farmer Elected Committees is—and will always be—to promote and improve the farmer elected committee system for the local administration of farm programs. The coordinated effort will give us strength, and much more influence in Congress for the kind of farm programs America's farmers, ranchers and rural communities need in order to thrive.

A voice in Washington, D.C. working with commodity groups, associations, and cooperatives in providing a united voice to promote American Agriculture & Ranching.

VISIT WWW.NAFECFSA.COM FOR MORE INFORMATION

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