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**Sent:** 1/31/2018 10:32:37 PM  
**Subject:** State Agriculture Officials Highlight Importance of Infrastructure, NAFTA for Agriculture  
**Attachments:** WPC Day 3\_InfrastructureFarmBill\_01312018.pdf

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** January 31, 2018

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## **State Agriculture Officials Highlight Importance of Infrastructure, NAFTA for Agriculture**

As the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) concluded its Winter Policy Conference today, state agriculture officials from around the country highlighted the importance of infrastructure investments for rural America, as well as the need to successfully modernize the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Both topics were highlighted as NASDA members convened at the White House for the White House Conference on Rural Prosperity.

Steven K. Reviczky, NASDA President and Connecticut Commissioner of Agriculture, commented on the need to address rural infrastructure.

“We look forward to working on infrastructure initiatives that empower state and local governments. Meaningful federal investments in rural America are necessary to further rural prosperity,” said Reviczky. “Infrastructure improvement, broadband expansion and increased work-based training are all areas that can benefit from an effective state-federal partnership.”

Following yesterday’s White House convening and the State of the Union, NASDA Members unanimously passed action items on infrastructure and rural broadband. Montana Director of Agriculture Ben Thomas, who serves as Vice Chair of NASDA’s Rural Development and Financial Security Committee, brought forth an action item calling for Congress and the Trump Administration to invest in broadband infrastructure and expand broadband service to rural Americans. Missouri Director of Agriculture Chris Chinn brought forth an action item calling for a fully funded infrastructure package by Congress and the Administration.

In addition, NASDA members continued to highlight the importance of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) for agriculture.

“Modernizing NAFTA in a manner that facilitates expanded trade in U.S. agricultural and food products, while ensuring a level playing field for producers, is vital to U.S. agriculture and the broader U.S. economy. We urge negotiators to finalize an agreement that preserves the gains agriculture has made under NAFTA and allows agricultural trade with our North American neighbors to continue to prosper.”

NASDA Members are gathered in Washington, DC this week for one of two annual meetings where the policy positions and priorities for the association are determined. In addition to infrastructure, NASDA Members passed the following action items:

- Marketing and International Trade:
  - Led by Washington Director of Agriculture Derek Sandison, NASDA urges negotiators of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to finalize an agreement which

preserve the gains agriculture has made under NAFTA. Agricultural trade with our North American neighbors must continue to prosper.

- Led by North Carolina Commissioner of Agriculture Steve Troxler, NASDA initiated an effort to work with USDA and Congress to improve local agricultural economies while also improving opportunities for local food procurement in schools.
- Natural Resources and Environment:
  - Led by Connecticut Commissioner of Agriculture Steve Reviczky, NASDA calls on the NRCS to work with states to improve delivery for the Agriculture Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) and give states the needed flexibility to increase conservation gains.
  - In addition to working with the USDA on ACEP delivery, NASDA urges Congress to improve ACEP delivery of matching funds provided through the Farm Bill.
  - Led by Wyoming Director of Agriculture Doug Miyamoto, NASDA calls on Congress to quickly enact legislation to eliminate costly and duplicative reporting requirements for animal agriculture under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA).
- Food Regulation:
  - Led by Michigan Director of Agriculture Jamie Clover Adams, NASDA calls on DHS to support direct funding to regional food and agricultural alliances who work to improve emergency planning and response efforts.
  - Led by North Carolina Commissioner of Agriculture Steve Troxler, NASDA urges Congress to address the numerous issues hindering the success of industrial hemp pilot programs allowed under the 2014 Farm Bill.
  - Led by Vermont Secretary of Agriculture Anson Tebbetts, NASDA will take a more assertive role in the national conversation about the farmer-buyer relationship while transitioning to full implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA).
- Animal Agriculture:
  - Led by Arizona Director of Agriculture Mark Killian, NASDA Members urge USDA and federal counterparts in Mexico to allow electronic signatures on paperwork required at international border crossings.

NASDA represents the elected and appointed commissioners, secretaries, and directors of the departments of agriculture in all fifty states and four U.S. territories. NASDA grows and enhances agriculture by forging partnerships and creating consensus to achieve sound policy outcomes between state departments of agriculture, the federal government, and stakeholders. For more information about the Winter Policy Conference, please click [here](#).

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