



LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

The Legislative Committee met via conference call to discuss the legislative priorities for the organization in 2020. The committee settled on continuing our efforts on HB 545 – Right to Farm and SB 211 – the Fake Meat Bill.

This past year has been a very active year on the legislative front. In the General Assembly, the Georgia Cattlemen's Association pushed for the passage of HB 545, the Right to Farm Bill. The bill had been passed the prior session through the House of Representatives, being carried by Representative Tom McCall and with wide support from many representatives. Senator John Wilkinson spearheaded the bill through the Senate Ag Committee, with amendments being made to address concerns within the bill. After its passage through committee, the bill was heard on the floor and then tabled for future consideration. As we began to address the concerns of Senators before a final vote, COVID-19 began its impact on the state.

Additionally, we began the process of working through the grocer industry concerns with SB 211, the Fake Meat bill, which was being carried by Senator Tyler Harper. As Representative McCall, who carried this bill on the house side, worked to get the scheduled in committee once we addressed the concerns of the grocers. Through meeting with their representative, we were able to provide changes to the bill which would address their concerns while simultaneously strengthening the bill and set specific requirements for labeling of alternative protein products including lab-grown protein. Unfortunately, the bill was not able to be heard in committee due to the impacts of COVID-19.

Before the recess, GCA was able to address a couple of concerns with bills that may have impacted our industry. For example, one bill addressed implanting "animals" with electronic identification, as well as requiring veterinarians to report the electronic identification information of each animal they see. With the potential for electronic id within our industry, and that our industry isn't setup with the infrastructure needed yet for widespread adoption of Electronic ID, we were able to have this bill clarified to exempt livestock instead of including them with the bill's original target of pet animals like dogs and cats.

GCA was able to hold our Annual Steak Biscuit Breakfast just before the recess began. This is always an invaluable event for our industry to be able to discuss our recommendations directly with lawmakers, as well as thanking them for the difficult task before them.

Once the session reconvened, GCA went to work advocating for Right to Farm to be reconsidered by the Senate. The bill was heard on the floor of the Senate and during that discussion three amendments were made. Of the three, one was adopted which effectively removed the protections the bill was attempting to secure for farmers and ranchers. Due to the

time constraints remaining in the session, the mechanism required for restoring these protections during conference committee were unable to be accomplished.

Additionally, GCA began discussions with the grocer industry to address their concerns with SB 211. The House Ag Committee took up the bill and directed both sides to work to find language that was acceptable to each side and would take up the bill the following week. The grocer industry wanted language based on Wyoming's fake meat bill which focused on Truth in Labeling of alternative protein products. This bill ensured that plant-based products had to prominently and conspicuously display "vegetarian," "veggie," "vegan," "plant based," or other similar term and cell-cultured products (fake meat) had to display terms such as "lab-grown," "lab-created," or "grown in a lab" if the products do not include the flesh, offal or other by-product from any part of the carcass of a live animal that has been slaughtered. SB 211 passed through the House without opposition and was immediately agreed to in the Senate. The bill was signed by Governor Kemp in July and became effective December 31, 2020. We greatly appreciate the efforts of Senator Tyler Harper and Representative Tom McCall for their efforts to enact this critical legislation for our industry.

The pandemic brought with it a great disparity in beef prices vs live cattle prices. Cattle producers, organizations and legislators began to present options to address this disparity including the 50/14 bill, the 30/14 proposal, bid-to-grid among others. To help provide some context and clarity, NCBA's live cattle marketing committee began to review these options. To ensure that GCA was able to advocate for the policies that were best for our members, President Childers appointed a working group comprised of members from our committee structure and interested parties to review these solutions. This working group was chaired by President Childers, Lawton Stewart – Production and Marketing Committee Chair, Brent Galloway – Legislative Committee Chair, James Vaughn – Executive Committee Member, Scott Andrews – Membership Committee Member, Todd Stephens – Livestock Market Operator, Matt Berry & Jerry McKinnon – At-Large Members from Production & Marketing Committees. During their deliberations, each proposal was carefully considered and the overwhelming feeling of the group was that unless the production and marketing side of the industry didn't change, processors would continue to have overwhelming leverage. This information allowed GCA to join with other states on a policy resolution at NCBA's Summer Business meeting which would help shift this leverage. The resolution included the potential for legislative action if certain negotiated cash trade requirements were not met. During NCBA's Summer Business meeting, this policy was debated for six hours and ultimately amended to allow for the packing industry to meet certain requirements that would cause a trigger to trip and then allow for a legislative solution to be attempted.

GCA has provided letters of support, comments and concerns on many different topics this year and will continue to work to ensure that our efforts are in the best interest of our members and the cattle industry in Georgia.