



## NATIONAL CONFERENCE of STATE LEGISLATURES

*The Forum for America's Ideas*

**Deb Peters**  
*Senator – District 9*  
*South Dakota*  
*President, NCSL*

**Chuck Truesdell**  
*Fiscal Analyst*  
*Office of Budget Review*  
*Legislative Research Commission*  
*Kentucky*  
*Staff Chair, NCSL*

**William T. Pound**  
*Executive Director*

10/2/2017

Secretary Sonny Perdue  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Secretary Perdue,

The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), the bipartisan organization representing the legislatures of our nation's states, territories, and commonwealths, recently held its 2017 Legislative Summit. After significant discussion and debate, the full conference adopted a number of policy positions concerning the relationship between states and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Included below are summaries of those policies with full copies attached.

### **Avian Flu Response**

In light of recent avian flu outbreaks in various states, NCSL urges the federal government to work with states to eradicate outbreaks and prevent contamination as poultry processing and production is not only a key driver of rural and state economies, but also delivers benefits the national economy and the country's international trade balance. NCSL and the states are willing partners in federal efforts to address avian flu and share best practices.

### **Cover Crop Research**

As concerns grow surrounding water quality, soil fertility, weed and nematode control, water retention and biodiversity, NCSL reiterates support for federal efforts to further the development, proliferation, and use of cover crops. Cover crops are essential to improving soil health, and proven to create an environment that naturally resists diseases and pests, reducing the need of Nitrogen and other nutrients, and adding diversity to the natural biological life.

### **Pollinator Health**

The negative ramifications of pollinator loss are well documented and pose a significant threat to U.S. agriculture and the ability of our farmers to feed a growing world population. Pollinators are vital organisms in the ecosystem, providing biodiversity, and ensuring agriculture economies continue to thrive. NCSL urges the federal government, as landowner and manager, regulator of pesticide products, and financial assistance provider to farmers and other private landowners, to develop best management practices that enhance pollinator habitats, provide technical assistance

**Denver**  
7700 East First Place  
Denver, Colorado 80230-7143  
Phone 303.364.7700 Fax 303.364.7800

**Washington**  
444 North Capitol Street, N.W. Suite 515  
Washington, D.C. 20001  
Phone 202.624.5400 Fax 202.737.1069

Website [www.ncsl.org](http://www.ncsl.org)  
Email [info@ncsl.org](mailto:info@ncsl.org)

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in identifying and implementing projects to conserve pollinators, and assess the effects of systemic pesticides and parasites on pollinator health and take action, as appropriate, to protect pollinators.

### **Industrial Hemp Farming**

NCSL supports federal legislation to define industrial hemp as a distinct agricultural crop (1 percent or less THC content) and allow states to regulate commercial hemp farming. NCSL believes that federal policies that obstruct industrial hemp farming are outdated and must be changed.

NCSL recognizes that decisions affecting American agriculture must reflect a working partnership of the federal government with the states in both the formulation and implementation of policy. We welcome the opportunity to work with USDA on areas of shared-concern for both the states and the federal government. Further details on NCSL's agriculture-related positions can be found in the attached policy documents.

Please contact NCSL staff, Ben Husch ([ben.husch@ncsl.org](mailto:ben.husch@ncsl.org)) and Kristen Hildreth ([kristen.hildreth@ncsl.org](mailto:kristen.hildreth@ncsl.org)) with any additional questions.

Sincerely,



Representative Curt McCormack  
NCSL Natural Resources and Infrastructure  
Committee Co-Chair  
Vermont House of Representatives



Representative Ed Orcutt  
NCSL Natural Resources and Infrastructure  
Committee Co-Chair  
Washington House of Representatives

Enclosures (4)

[Avian Flu Response Policy Resolution](#)  
[Cover Crop Research Policy Resolution](#)  
[Pollinator Health Policy Resolution](#)  
[National Agriculture Policy Directive](#)