Arkansas Election Results Provide Very Few Surprises

By: Max Braswell

Twenty-five new House members and eight new Senators will fill the seats in the 92nd Arkansas General Assembly when it convenes in January of next year after the results of the November Arkansas General Election. However, the partisan balance will remain the same with Republicans holding 26 of the Senate’s 35 seats, and 76 of 100 House seats. Republicans also maintained their dominance of the state’s Constitutional offices, holding all seven positions.

Governor Asa Hutchinson was elected to his second term in office, defeating Jared Henderson (D) and Mark West (L) at the polls on November 6.

Give to Grow Program Bears Fruit for AFAEF, ACH

In its second year, the Give to Grow program raised over $8,000 to support the Arkansas Forestry Association Education Foundation (AFAEF) and Arkansas Children’s Hospital (ACH).

This program was created by J.D. Neeley, the president of Neeley Forestry Service Inc, in Camden in 2017. It was designed to generate support for both organizations by using a common theme.

The money was raised by Neeley’s clients working with their hunting clubs. They had the opportunity to donate 15 cents per acre to Give to Grow. Those who chose to opt into the program, received the tax-deductible donation on their hunting invoice and it was then collected by Neeley Forestry Service.

With those donations, the program raised a total of $8,725 and will be split evenly between AFAEF and ACH.

At the beginning of the year, Neeley’s goal was to grow the program. He said he continues to work to make sure more and more people know about Give to Grow.

="I’m going to continue to communicate this great program to our landowners and let them know of the awesome chance to give back through the AFA’s new Give to Grow program," Neeley said. "I’m also going to personally reach out to other consultants and managers to ask them to spread the word.”

If you would like more information about the Give to Grow program and how a similar effort might fit into your organization, contact the Arkansas Forestry Association at (501) 374-2441.

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Tis the Season to Give: Easy Ways to Donate to AFAEF During the Holidays

The holiday season is here and just by shopping for loved ones, you can make tax-deductible donations to the Arkansas Forestry Association Education Foundation (AFAEF).

When you shop online at Amazon, a small percentage of qualifying purchases will go to the foundation if you use AmazonSmile. To start donating is simple. First, go to smile.amazon.com and choose Arkansas Forestry Association Education Foundation Inc. as the charity. From there, shop like normal and the site will donate half of one percent to the foundation at no additional cost to you. AmazonSmile currently does not work on the Amazon mobile app. You must use a web browser when shopping to donate.

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Election Results, con’t.

primary and general election races. Thirty of those candidates were elected to office. Arkansas voters approved three ballot initiatives on November 6. Issue 2 adds as a qualification to vote, that a voter present certain valid photographic ID when casting a ballot in person or an Absentee ballot.

Voters also approved an amendment to require four licenses to be issued for casino gaming in the state and voted to increase the state’s minimum wage to $11 per hour by 2021. Two other proposed changes to the Arkansas Constitution regarding tort reform and term limits were kicked off the ballot by the state Supreme Court before the election.

For those following the polls and prognosticators, there were also no real surprises at the Federal level. As expected, Democrats gained the majority in the U.S. House of Representatives, while Republicans maintained their majority in the U.S. Senate. While Democratic control of the lower chamber will mean changes to many committees that handle policy issues of importance to forestry, it should not dramatically change forestry’s advocacy approach. Specific to forestry, all four Co-Chairs of the House Working Forest Caucus – Rep. Bruce Westerman (R-AR), Collin Peterson (D-MN), Sanford Bishop (D-FA) and Jaime Herrera-Beutler (R-WA) won re-election, as did Senate Working Forests Caucus Co-Chair Angus King (I-ME). Republican Senate Co-Chair Jim Risch (R-ID) was not in this election cycle.

The upcoming Lame Duck session of Congress is expected to focus on finalizing a new Farm Bill, which expired on September 30. Rep. Peterson, who is the incoming Chair of the House Agriculture Committee, has expressed his desire to complete the Farm Bill this year and is not planning to start over with his own bill. The major hurdle to overcome will be on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) work requirements included in the House bill, which are supported by President Trump. According to the National Alliance of Forest Owners (NAFO), the Timber Innovation Act is still well-positioned for inclusion in the Farm Bill.

In addition to the Farm Bill, Congress will be working to complete the remaining appropriation bills, including the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill that funds the Environmental Protection Agency. Biomass continues to be positively positioned, but permanency language, long sought by forestry, is a longshot.

Back at home, AFA is preparing for the 2019 legislative session, which will convene Monday, January 14. Association members are invited to attend Forestry Day at the Capitol on Tuesday, January 22. The event kicks off at 9 a.m. and will include forestry exhibitors, a seedling giveaway, opportunities to attend legislative committee meetings and more.

In addition, the always-popular House and Senate Legislative Maps are in production and should be available, free of charge, by the second week of December.

If you would like more information on any legislative event, project or issue, or would like to be added to the weekly Legislative Update distribution list, please call the AFA office at 501-374-2441 or email Max Braswell at mbraswell@arkforests.org.
Tree Farm Tour Brings Foresters, Landowners to McCollum Land Co.

In October, the McCollum Land Company, Inc., (MLC) was announced as the Arkansas Tree Farmer of the Year. MLC was established to oversee the management of the MLC timberlands in Columbia County, Arkansas. The company is comprised of 72 shareholders and currently has members that make up the 5th generation of the McCollum family with at least two more generations in place for future roles. On Friday, October 26, the Arkansas Tree Farm Program (ATFP) hosted the Annual Tree Farm of the Year Tour in Emerson, AR. Over 40 landowners and forestry professionals gathered to tour the MLC Tree Farm and discuss the exemplary forest practices employed on the property. Charles and Jane Purtle, representing MLC, McCollum Land Company, were on hand to tell the history of the property which was originally obtained prior to the American Civil War.

Charles Purtle talks to the group about the operations of the tree farm at the second stop of the tour to discuss topics that included site preparation and tree cloning.

Farm Program (ATFP) hosted the Annual Tree Farm of the Year Tour in Emerson, AR. Over 40 landowners and forestry professionals gathered to tour the MLC Tree Farm and discuss the exemplary forest practices employed on the property. Charles and Jane Purtle, representing MLC, McCollum Land Company, were on hand to tell the history of the property which was originally obtained prior to the American Civil War.

“‘I always learn something when I go to Tree Farm tours,’ Charles Purtle said. ‘I even learn things when they are on my property.”

Talking to other landowners is always informative.”

Nick Muir, technical manager with International Forest Company, and Greg Hay with Nutrien Ag Solutions discussed different ways to take care of your timber, specifically the benefits of prescribed fire, containerized seedlings and the benefits and pitfalls of enhanced or cloned seedlings. Brian Clark of Kingwood Forestry Services talked about the recent forest management that had taken place on the property, and Rick Rodenroth of Domtar discussed the value of certification.

“Events such as this embody what the Arkansas Tree Farm program is all about,” Tree Farm Administrator Jennifer Johnson said. “When people ask me what the value of being in the program is, I always have education and networking within my top three things.”

Having received the state award, the McCollum Land Company will now compete for the National Tree Farmer of the Year award, presented by the American Forest Foundation. Photos from the tour can be found on the Arkansas Tree Farm Program Facebook page.

Money donated to the Arkansas Forestry Association Education Foundation is used to educate landowners, teachers and students around Arkansas about forestry and land management in the state.

If you have any questions about donating, you can contact Rob Beadel at (501) 374-2441 or rbeadel@arkforests.org.

Shopping at Kroger is another way you can give to AFAEF. The Kroger Community Rewards program gives $1.5 million back every year to non-profit organizations. When you enroll your Kroger card, a portion of that money could go to AFAEF and it will not cost you any extra. Log in to your online Kroger account at Kroger.com, click the menu, choose savings and rewards, and then click Kroger Community Rewards. The Arkansas Forestry Association Education Foundation’s NPO number is 63528.

Easy Ways to Donate, con’t.

If you would simply like to make a larger donation to the foundation, you can do one of two things. You can mail a check to 1213 W 4th Street, Little Rock, AR, 72201 or donate online at arkforests.org. Click the donations tab at the top and choose where you would like your donation to go.

Donations like these are what help the foundation continue to provide education on forestry around the state. AFAEF provides workshops all year to landowners wanting to learn more about forest management. It also works to publish various educational materials to ensure landowners have the information they need in order to make sound forest management decisions. Along with educating landowners, work done by the foundation also helps inform teachers and students across Arkansas. With the help of Project Learning Tree, AFAEF offers professional development for teachers so they can learn ways to incorporate forestry into their curriculum.

You can also connect your Kroger card with the Kroger Community Rewards program that will give money back to AFAEF at no extra cost.

Attendees learn about the use of cloned trees planted on a portion of the McCollum Land Company.
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