



# THE GRANGE CELEBRATES NATIONAL MENTORING MONTH

"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn."

*-Benjamin Franklin*

January 8, 2021

## **Farmers to Families Food Box Program**

*By Betsy E. Huber, National Grange President*

Since May, 132 million food boxes have been delivered to struggling Americans thanks to the USDA's Farmers to Families Food Box Program. As of midnight December 31, that program was scheduled to end--in fact, funding in many regions had already run out weeks before because the need was so great.

Congress passed the Consolidated Appropriations Act combined with another COVID aid bill on December 21<sup>st</sup>, but it did not specifically fund the Food Box Program. The Grange sent out a statement calling on legislators and the incoming administration to prioritize this crucial program.

We stated that we hope Congress will act, but also urged President-elect Biden and Secretary of Agriculture nominee Vilsack "to prioritize and restore the Farmers to Families Food Box Program with funds Congress just authorized in the coronavirus relief package and omnibus spending bill." Measures must be taken to ensure the citizens of one of the most food-rich countries in the world do not needlessly go hungry.

The Farmers to Families Food Box Program is critical because it not only aids the hungry, but also supports our farmers who work every day to produce the great food we have available. Because of distribution problems in the pandemic, many farmers lost access to large portions of their markets. American farmers are extraordinarily productive, and it's important that farmers are able to fulfill their calling - to provide sustenance to their families, their neighbors and the world. Hunger should be unnecessary in America. Government intervention through programs like the Farmers to Families Food Box Program are critical to personal health and civil stability, and we urged its immediate restoration.

USDA Secretary Perdue announced on Monday that the program will be funded with the purchase of another \$1.5 billion of food for nationwide distribution. Since the program began on May 15<sup>th</sup>, more than 132 million boxes of food in support of American farmers has been distributed to families affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This totals more than 3.3 billion meals!

We all hope and pray for the day to come soon when this aid will no longer be needed and families can return to work to provide for their families. Meanwhile, we thank Congress and Secretary Perdue for continuing to fund this essential program.

## **In Light of an American Tragedy**

The National Grange is shocked and saddened by the loss of civility and respect in America today.

The tragedy that unfolded yesterday as a mob overran our Capitol building was not a spontaneous event, but something fostered over time. It has been slowly encroaching into the fabric of our lives for a number of years.

It is not the result of any one faction but of all factions who are intolerant of every point of view except their own. Americans have always been proud of the fact that we can disagree with each other without being disagreeable. Our country was founded on the famous "melting pot" principle, where all peoples who share the values and principles of our country's founding documents are welcome on our shores.

Those who promote hate, intolerance, violence, destruction and insurrection are not part of the American way. Those who seek to divide us as Americans are dangerous to our democracy. What's more, intolerant individuals who cannot abide by one of our founding principles - "difference of opinion is no crime" - have no place in the Grange, which was borne out of a time of strife similar to that today.

At that time, lines seemed cleanly divided based on geography. Today, hate and anarchy are festering insidiously among us in every community and it is the job of the Grange and organizations like it to find ways to foster dialogue, nurture human kindness and bring people back together, respecting each other as neighbors even when disagreeing on issues. Should we fail to rise to this challenge, we are failing the legacy left us by our great Grange founders and all those who came before us in this organization.

First, however, we should observe our most basic principles - faith, hope, charity and fidelity - and urge every neighbor and friend of ours "of good moral character" to do the same. It is only through these actions that we will see peace and civility return to our nation and make it one worth passing onto the next generations.

## **Mentors, Mentoring and The Power of Let's!**

*By Christine Hamp National Grange Lecture*

"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn." This quote by Benjamin Franklin, for me, perfectly describes mentors and mentoring.

Mentors provide opportunities to grow and to reach. Mentors are cheerleaders who will also provide a "swift kick" when necessary. Mentorship plays an important role in shaping leaders of character, discipline and vision. Mentorship represents an investment – an investment where we may not know the full impact until many years later.

We must ask ourselves, are we adequately preparing the next generation of leaders? Are we providing them with the tools and skills and opportunities necessary to navigate successfully through the challenges and uncertainty that they will face in the future? Did our mentors do the same for us?

Let me start by talking about my own Grange journey. I am fortunate that my Grange journey is that of my lifetime. Every step along the way provides tools and lessons and yes, some hard knocks. There has been no single ah-ha moment. No single person – but wow have there been some AMAZING people. A Grange journey is not one you take alone!

No other organization, ever, offers its members the opportunity to be mentored for a lifetime! I want to make some points about mentors and mentoring – and I'm going to name names – the names are for me, but each of you will find yourself putting names of your own mentors in as I go along. Each of these folks were and/or are mentors of mine as I'm sure they were for many others.

- Ray Schneider – Brother Schneider was a member of our State Grange Executive Committee and a perennial Chair of the state convention Good of the Order Committee – my first year as a delegate he named me secretary of his committee and taught me how the process worked.
- Vance Arter – Brother Arter was our Special Deputy for Ritual who made the ritual cool for so many of us, and taught me to do it right every time, regardless of where you were or how many people were present.
- Dorothy Harper – Sister Harper was a delegate to state convention for decades and whose attention to detail was second to none – the clock didn't matter, the subject didn't matter, if it was going to be Grange policy, then get it right! It matters!
- Codi Titus – Sister Codi was a girl just enough older than I to do all the things I wanted to do and do them well (State Youth Master, Master of National Youth Officer Corp) – she was so cool (she still is really cool!)
- Del and Lucy Snodgrass – Brother and Sister Snodgrass were the nicest couple who always had a smile, a hug, and a kind word and who always seemed to sit in a strategic place to give a thumbs up. I still always find myself looking for a Del and Lucy!

This is by no means a complete list, but simply some folks who influenced me and who served as mentors whether they knew it or not.

We must remember the importance of mentors. Also, we must remember that people are watching and listening and following our lead. Can your actions be defined as mentoring? Our beloved Grange's future depends on our stewardship, especially our ability to prepare the next generation of leaders to lead! We must ensure that we are stronger tomorrow than we are today!

Earlier, I talked about my Grange journey, but while I was doing that you were thinking back about your own. While there are plenty of testimonials to this organization's ability to grow and develop its members – there are not enough, not near enough. Why are our youth and young members leaving and not coming back? Why are we struggling to recruit and retain members? What young person, or any person, wouldn't want to receive and benefit from the skills and experiences gained through Grange membership? How do we better share our stories?

These tools and the experiences I speak of are indeed relevant and coveted in today's world. It is our responsibility to ensure that our journey be repeated in some form or fashion over and over and over in every community across this country. It's called investing in the future.

Share your passion! Empower young people and/or new members by getting them started on their own Grange journey. Pay it forward! Do it now! Each of us must recognize that we are only temporary stewards of this tremendous organization and that it is incumbent upon us to honor the memory of those before us by ensuring they will not be a forgotten footnote in history.

## **Georgia Senate Runoffs Rundown**

*By Sean O'Niel*

On January 5, voters once again went to the polls to resolve the final outstanding election of the 2020 cycle by voting in a duo of crucial Senate runoff races. In Georgia if neither candidate receives greater than 50% of the vote in a statewide election then that race automatically goes to a runoff election featuring the top two candidates. In both the regularly scheduled Senate election for a six-year term between incumbent Republican Senator David Perdue and Democratic challenger Jon Ossoff, and the special election for a two-year term between incumbent Republican Senator Kelly Loeffler and Democratic challenger Rafael Warnock neither candidate received greater than 50% of the vote and so runoffs were initiated. These runoffs gained extra importance as the balance of power in the Senate following November's elections left Republicans with 50 seats and Democrats with 48, meaning that if Democrats won both runoffs, they would hold an equal number of seats as the Republicans and Vice President Kamala Harris could break ties in their favor.

Following an expensive and fraught campaign, both Democratic challengers Jon Ossoff and Rafael Warnock were able to narrowly win their respective races on January 5<sup>th</sup> adding two seats to the Democratic caucus and leaving a 50-50 divided Senate with Vice President Kamala Harris as the tiebreaking vote. The impact of this change is enormous and will affect President-elect Biden's cabinet appointments, judicial nominations, and legislative priorities.

The most immediate impact of narrow Democratic control of the Senate will come as President-elect Biden seeks to quickly confirm the cabinet for his new administration. Had Republicans retained control of the Senate many cabinet nominees would likely have faced an elongated and difficult confirmation process, however with Democratic control the process will likely be quick and smooth. While many of President-elect Biden's currently announced nominees were more moderate and likely to receive bipartisan support regardless of the outcome of Georgia's runoffs, key nominees such as Neera Tanden to direct the Office of Management and Budget were likely to face significant headwinds. It was rumored that President-elect Biden was waiting for the results of the Georgia runoffs before determining his choice for Attorney General out of fears that some of his preferred candidates may struggle to be confirmed. Post the results from Georgia, Biden announced his pick of Merrick Garland on Thursday.

Democratic Senate control is incredibly important for moving judicial nominations. During the final years of the Obama administration, Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell took pride in denying many judicial nominations a chance to be confirmed until President Trump took office, most notably in the case of then-DC circuit court Judge Garland who was nominated to the Supreme Court. With Democratic control of the Senate, Garland and other judicial nominees will be guaranteed hearings and are significantly more likely to be confirmed.

Finally, with control of the Senate President-elect Biden will be able to push more of his legislative priorities. With the Senate in Democratic hands, bills passed by the Democratic House of Representatives will be able to receive a vote in the Senate, unlike in the past few years when the Republican Senate often refused to vote on House bills. However, in order for these priorities to be passed not only will moderate Democratic Senators such as Joe Manchin, Kyrsten Sinema, Mark Kelly, and John Tester have to be persuaded but also 10 Republican Senators so as to overcome the filibuster with 60 votes. In select instances, certain key priorities will be able to be passed with 50 votes through a process known as budget reconciliation but these opportunities will be rare.

Altogether, the Democratic victories in both Georgia runoffs will be very impactful in the next two years of the Biden administration allowing him to confirm his cabinet nominees, judicial selections, and push his legislative agenda.

## **A FEW GREAT MENTIONS**

*This is a new section we will include each week with a few of the links to articles in which the local, State or the National Grange have been mentioned or our statements have appeared.*

- Civility, high-speed rural broadband, defending dairy and defining meat, the Pa. State Grange outlines its 2021 agenda  
<https://www.goerie.com/story/opinion/columns/2021/01/05/op-ed-pennsylvania-grange-outlines-its-2021-agenda/4016030001/>, Erie, PA
- Grange presses state over Chinook Tunnel safety,  
[https://www.chinookobserver.com/news/local/grange-presses-state-over-chinook-tunnel-safety/article\\_edaeef56-4eeb-11eb-bce2-3f275c143af2.html](https://www.chinookobserver.com/news/local/grange-presses-state-over-chinook-tunnel-safety/article_edaeef56-4eeb-11eb-bce2-3f275c143af2.html), Long Beach, WA

## **GRANGE COMMENTS ON WEEKLY ITEMS OF INTEREST**

*This is a new section we will include each week with at least one quote from the week prior made about a policy issue or current event by National Grange President Betsy Huber or other Grange leaders for inclusion by media or to spark interest in the rural perspective.*

- National Grange President Betsy Huber, Legislative Director Burton Eller, and Communications Director Amanda Brozana-Rios met with the Biden transition team to discuss goal for rural America in 2021. Topics discussed were broadband, healthcare, infrastructure, and rural mail delivery.

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