



PATRONS CHAIN

The Official Newsletter of the National Grange

Former FCC Chairman addresses Grange

BY SASHA SECOR

Communications Fellow

At the 2021 National Grange Convention Advocacy Luncheon, attendees were introduced to speaker, Former Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai.

Pai is a long time friend of the National Grange, and being invited to an in-person meal is something he was thankful to be a part of, especially in his home state of Kansas.

"You heard it from Dorothy well before you heard from me: 'there's no place like home,'" Pai said.

Pai was thrilled to receive and accept this invitation, having long admired the work done by the National Grange to highlight issues of importance to rural America. He lauded the Grange's recent



FCC Chairman Pai addressed the Delegates at the Advocacy Luncheon in the kickoff to the 155th Annual Session. | Photo by Lindsay Schroeder

work in Washington, D.C. on behalf of farmers, ranchers, and small-town America.

"Elected officials aren't just thinking about New York's Manhattan or California's Manhattan Beach - they're also thinking about Manhattan, Kansas, and places far smaller and more rural than that."

Pai shared that he grew up in the small town of Parsons, Kansas, with his mother, father, and sister.

Parsons is a town about two hours southeast of Wichita, a town that some people might dismiss as "fly-over country," but according to Pai, it was a wonderful place to grow up.

While visiting Parsons, Pai was able to visit familiar landmarks from his youth

PAI

cont'd on Page 3



FCC Chairman Pai poses with National Grange President Betsy Huber.

Photo by Lindsay Schroeder

Huber opens session, outlines agenda

BY BRITTNEY OLIVER

John Trimble Legislative Youth Delegate

and PHILIP VONADA

Senior Communications Fellow

President Betsy Huber opened the 155th Annual Session of the National Grange on November 9 in Wichita, Kansas. In her external address she addressed some of the challenges, work accomplished and successes of the last year.

Huber highlighted that "the National Grange continues to recapture its historical reputation as the voice for rural and small-town America."

By participating in a multitude of issue coalitions based around agriculture, healthcare, and rural broadband, an in-

creasing number of influencers in D.C. are "realizing that grassroots rural and small-town residents actually do have a voice in the nation's Capital, and that voice is the Grange."

She went on to thank Burton Eller, National Grange Legislative Director, for his work in Grange Advocacy. His work keeps the Grange a well-respected voice on the Hill.

Many programs such as the annual Legislative Fly-in were held virtually this year and were well-attended by participants from all over the country.

The Grange has remained active in lob-

AGENDA

cont'd on Page 2

Scheduling Note

Join the Fellows in **Cypress A** at 5 p.m. on Wednesday for a workshop on making your Grange events a success in the press



You're Simply the Best!

Thanks to Kathy and Dwight Baldwin (IA) for the sweet treats, and Debbie and Royal Vine (WI) for a fantastic dairy treat on Tuesday!



Follow the Fellows on social media, and stay up to date with the happenings at Session.

Instagram:

n.grange_communication_fellows

Facebook:

National Grange

Twitter:

NationalGrange

New Director joins National Grange staff

BY LINDSAY SCHROEDER
Senior Communications Fellow

Philip J. Vonada of Pennsylvania has been hired as Communications Director of the National Grange. Philip has big shoes to fill as he assumes the role left open by Amanda Brozana Rios, who was recently appointed National Grange Membership and Leadership Director.

“I am looking forward to the challenges and opportunities this new role provides,” says Vonada.

“As somebody who has grown up in the Grange, I am excited to be able to continue growing the Grange by increasing our outreach and communication, both within our Granges and out to the public at large. Over the past several years, Amanda has set up a strong Communications department, and I am grateful for her leadership and our ability to continue to work alongside each other as she completes the transition into her new role.”

Vonada is currently serving as Senior Communications Fellow at the 155th National Grange Session in Wichita, Kansas.

Leading the Communication Fellows is Vonada’s first major project in his new role.

He is eager to expand his abilities

and provide essential services for the Grange to grow as an organization.

A major goal for Vonada as Communications Director is to connect with Granges who may not feel tightly connected to the National Grange. He hopes to improve resources for representatives to take home to enrich their local communities.

“Philip brings a positive attitude, a strong work ethic, and a broad background in the Grange and public relations to this position,” said Betsy Huber, National Grange President. “He is going to be a strong asset in connecting Granges at all levels and is an exciting addition to the National Grange staff.”

Vonada resides in Williamsport,



Philip J. Vonada
Photo by Lindsay Schroeder

Pennsylvania, where he is a member of Penns Valley Grange #158 in Centre County and Eagle Grange #1 in Lycoming County. He serves as the Director of the Pennsylvania State Junior Grange, and was previously a Communications Fellow in 2019 and Trimble Legislative Youth Delegate in 2018.

“The communications department is multifaceted and fast-paced. I think having a fresh perspective will provide our members and our organization as a whole with a renewed energy. Phil has a deep Grange background that will help him hit the ground running. I’m really excited to see where he will take us,” said Brozana Rios.

Vonada is the General Manager of the Community Theatre League in Williamsport until the end of this year, when he will officially assume his new role.

He holds a Bachelor’s degree in Speech Communication and Theatre from Millersville University of Pennsylvania and a Master of Arts from Villanova University. In his spare time, Vonada enjoys theater, baking, cooking, working out and reading.

Please make sure you say “Hi” to Philip, introduce yourselves, and welcome him to his new role!

AGENDA from page 1

bying the USDA on issues including food assistance programs that were developed and started near the beginning of the pandemic, encouraging the approval of selling locally-processed meats across state lines, and advocating for increased funding for agriculture research.

Huber added, “The National Grange and the Agriculture Workforce Coalition continue to urge Congress to pass bipartisan agriculture labor reform legislation.”

The unaffordable out-of-pocket costs associated with Medicare Part D prescriptions continues to be an issue that the National Grange is petitioning Congress to rectify.

In agriculture discussions, the keyword this year has been “sustainability.” The Grange is working to ensure that the legislature’s efforts to reduce greenhouse gasses is not penalizing or over-regulating our nation’s farmers.

The pandemic shed light on our nation’s supply chain issues. The Grange is “working with congress to ensure that the meatpacking industry is providing fair prices and transactions for both producers and consumers, and that state meat inspection programs equivalent to federal programs are acceptable for interstate commerce,” Huber said.

A longstanding goal for the National Grange is expanded rural broadband. The Grange continues to monitor the rollout of new funding for deployment efforts, with the goal of ensuring that the unserved are connected first and that “connectivity reaches the last mile of rural America.”

Pennsylvania State Grange President Wayne Campbell believes “The Grange has to remain a visible organization in the political climate in D.C.”

In response to Huber’s speech, Campbell said, “It is our grassroots community relations that will allow

us to be a voice for local agriculture. It is imperative that we try to be a voice of reason to prevent legislation from being passed that could destroy American agriculture.”

Melanie Bostwick, First Lady of the Kansas State Grange, says that one of the Grange’s strongest assets is our ability to network across America. She says that it is the “interconnect- edness of rural infrastructure such as broadband and healthcare that must be protected,” and the Grange is at the forefront of those efforts.

As she began her internal address to the Delegates assembled at the 155th Session of the National Grange, President Betsy Huber was greeted with applause.

“It is wonderful to be standing here in front of a roomful of Grangers in person this year!” she said, “Now is the time to get back to work.”

Huber urged Grangers to get “back in the habit” of monthly or

AGENDA
cont’d on Page 5



Delegates at the 155th Annual Session gather for their annual photo. | Photo by Lindsay Schroeder

PAI

from page 1

such as the hospital, the public library, and the local high school.

Pai says he is worried about the state of his hometown though. “Things seemed quieter, smaller than before,” he said.

After some investigation, he found that according to the census of 1980 (not too long after Pai’s family had settled into the town), the population of Parsons was almost 13,000, but the 2020 census showed a flat 9,600.

This is a 25% population drop over the past forty years.

Based on conversations Pai had had with his friends around town, the number of participants in school lunch programs have increased, health indicators have decreased, and key businesses have left town, taking some good paying jobs with them in the process.

Young people have been leaving rural areas in search of opportuni-

ties that they believe they cannot find in the small towns they grew up in.

Aside from community health of these small rural areas, the actual wellness of the citizens is suffering as well.

“The literal health of rural Americans has suffered too,” Pai said. “You’re familiar with the statistics for things like heart disease and cancer, which harm rural residents more frequently than others.”

Although Pai was not fully sure, he could only suspect that rates of suicide and other mental health issues have increased with the added isolation and stress of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pai explained that efforts are being made to advance a proposal to designate 9-8-8 as a three digit suicide prevention and mental health number, due in part to the Grange’s involvement in 2019 and 2020 to advance the proposal.

Pai then presented the question ‘What is underlying all these trends?’

Pai strongly believes that the reason people are leaving rural areas and not returning is because of the perception that living in a rural area means giving up access to broadband, for most it is a must-have and not a simple want.

Though broadband will not solve all of rural America’s problems, it is a good place to start in bridging the gap of the digital divide.

“It’s up to you to keep up the fight. In the halls of Congress, in state capitols, in county board meetings, at senior centers, at schools...” he said.

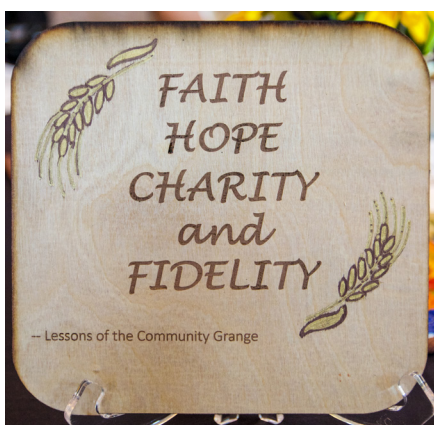
Pai closed his speech by reciting the National Grange motto “In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.”

Pai’s full speech can be found on the National Grange Facebook page and the National Grange YouTube channel ([youtube.com/national-grange](https://www.youtube.com/national-grange)).



Brandon Whipple, Mayor of Wichita, wished attendees a great National Session and thanked everyone for being in Wichita.

Photo by Lindsay Schroeder



Delegate body greets new members

BY ETHAN EDWARDS

Communications Fellow

Delaware State Grange President Jim Correll joins the group of first-time Delegates.

Correll, of Clayton, Delaware is a 58-year member of Smyrna Grange #21. He was elected State President at the Delaware State Grange Session in December 2020.

Although his duties as a Delegate are new, Correll is no stranger to the National Grange Session, having previously attended “five or six” conventions, including as half of the Young Couple in the early 1970s.

A retired dairy farmer, Correll is looking forward to serving on the Agriculture Committee this year.

“I sold my dairy herd a number of years ago,” Correll said. “I was get-

ting to retirement age and the bottom fell out of the dairy business.” Correll’s older son continues to raise hay on their 165 acres.

Membership is the biggest concern for Correll. “It seems that young people just don’t join things these days. I try to target younger people in their thirties when they are beginning to get settled in the community,” he said.

Delaware State Grange Vice President Donna “D. J.” Kiessling is attending the convention with Correll.

While not here as a Delegate, she is eager to attend the Seventh Degree and become familiar with the workings of the organization for a future time when she might be President.

Kiessling has been a Grange member since 2013, joining after being



D. J. Kiessling and Jim Correll

Photo by Lindsay Schroeder

invited to attend a local Grange picnic. It is the just kind of membership success story that Correll imagines.

Correll and Kiessling flew from Delaware to Wichita, marking Correll’s very first commercial flight.

“It was great, but I was sure happy that D. J. was there to help navigate our way through the airports,” Correll admitted with a gracious smile.

How to Say Thank You: *Quality Time*

BY AMANDA BROZANA RIOS, *Director of Membership and Leadership Development*

Individuals whose preferred language for member or volunteer appreciation is quality time most feel respected when individuals spend time getting to know them, listen and participate in activities together.

Consider setting a quarterly dinner or hobby day for just you and someone you know who falls into this category. Or offer to ride together to a Grange event some

distance away. Make sure to put your phone on silent and out of sight and engage in conversation to show you care.

As you go through this week, make sure to take notice of the appreciation language of those around you and use it to cultivate stronger connections with one another.



No Grange Store at Session

STAFF DESK

Unfortunately, the Grange Store will not be open at the National Grange Convention this year. Mike Warner, owner of Monroe Classic who hold the rights to the Grange emblem and name for merchandise, made the business decision not to come to the National Session. At the time, it was very unclear how well attended the convention would be due to the pandemic.

You can still purchase your Grange pins and apparel from the Monroe Classic website at:

<https://www.monroeclassic.com/>

The **Grange Supply Store** will be

up and running however, with all of the supplies you need to create a foundation for your Grange to grow upon.

Never to be printed again are the secretary books, which can hold up to one hundred meetings worth of records. Record books are reduced from \$15 to \$5 per book or you can get three for \$12.

Orders will be taken for the new items in the Grange Supply Store such as the Grange resource binder, flash drive, and the orientation kits.

Anything that is not in the store can be ordered through Loretta Washington, Benefits/ Sales Director, who runs the National Grange Supply Store.



There will be samples of the 25-year Grange Membership Awards that have been updated to look more like the 50- and 75-year membership awards, though they remain at the same \$10 price.

The Grange Supply Store will be open whenever the National Grange office spaces are open.

AGENDA

from page 3

semi-monthly meetings and activities. She encouraged making strong, renewed efforts to attract new members who have found that they want “more useful, valuable activities than just busy-ness.”

She touched on the tense political discourse and climate throughout the United States, saying, “We must set the example for the rest of the country, not become like it. Please exercise patience, forbearance, charity, and tolerance in all your meetings and Grange activities.”

Huber said she never knew how important our Grange theme for the past two years would have been. “Cultivating Connections” became

all-too-real during the pandemic, as it took work to reach out and continue to foster the work of the Grange.

Over the next two years, the National Grange will operate with the theme “Raised Right Here.”

Amanda Brozana Rios, Director of Membership and Leadership Development says that the theme is focused on resources, local sustainability, and resiliency for rural communities and hometowns.

“We are on the verge of major change in our organization,” Huber said, noting the effects of the pandemic on the organization, and decisions that will be made during this year’s Session. “Our founders were radical thinkers, not afraid to take chances and try new things. Can we live up to their heritage?”

Corralling the Herd

BY ANN OLSEN BERCHER

*President, Minnesota State Grange;
Former Communications Fellow*

In 2013, then Communications Director Amanda Brozana Rios launched a program that seemed a bit “fur-fetched.”

At that time, she introduced the National Grange Herd, a group of stuffed animals that were given to the Presidents of the State Granges. The Presidents were charged with using their mascot in a variety of ways that were specific to their state, such as helping to grow Granges, or visit specific fairs and fundraisers held by Granges in their State.

For all, they were told to just have some fun during a difficult National Session.

Through social media posts and visits to Granges, the National Grange Herd provided more information about what was happening in local and State Granges around the country. This gave Granges an opportunity to learn more about each other in a whimsical way.

Where are the members of the herd now? A few are on the loose at this National Session.

Fay the Ferret from Indiana has a new president to train, Gene Lohrman. Presley the Peacock has been in the Grange office collecting Community Service books for Community Service Director Pete Pompper. Willy the Mountain Sheep has been guiding the Communication Fellows through their activities. Billy Shufeldt of Oklahoma appeared in the elevator with Penelope the Prairie Dog.

“I guess we have prairie dogs in Oklahoma,” Shufeldt said with a grin. “Well, here’s one.”

Susan Noah of Oregon explained that Hannah the Bear picked up a friend while traveling to Yellowstone Park. “We joined the park membership and received our choice of a stuffed animal,”

Noah explained. “We selected a grizzly bear named Jack. Hannah has turned out to be a good recruiter!”

Debbie Vine of Wisconsin has a small herd of Holstein cows. “Every time we move, Beatrice goes missing and we need to get another one,” Vine noted.

Hank the Burro of Connecticut has still been writing his columns in their newsletter. Wendy the Wolf of Minnesota has appeared in Wichita



RAISED RIGHT HERE

A HOMETOWN
RESILIENCE PARTNER

Using “Raised Right Here” TIPS FROM AMANDA BROZANA RIOS

In Your Programming

- Encourage local Granges to do what they already often do: have local individuals with farms and businesses be part of their meetings and events.
- Encourage discussions about local sustainability and resilience
- Provide talking points for local Granges about the impact of farms and small businesses on local economies as well as challenges they face
- Provide (for fee) lawn signs and window stickers with the RRH tag/logo that can be personalized to a county or region to identify local producers and mom-and-pop businesses
- Sell shirts and other items with the RRH branding and Grange logo encouraging people to see Grange as a place where local talent is “raised” (products aren’t just physical things - they are also Human Resources)

Legislative Connections

- Look for legislation to endorse or groups to partner with to advocate for funding and creative opportunities for small businesses and local farms/ag businesses (again, just another thing we do that can now fall under the umbrella)
- Lead or be significant part of coalitions to encourage options to keep people on farms or small businesses open (especially related to health insurance, grants and educational opportunities)

and is ready to get back to work.

This year, there is a new member in the herd! Welcome Delano the Rooster, mascot for Membership! If you have seen a stuffed rooster roaming about, it’s probably Delano.

According to Amanda Brozana Rios, Membership and Leadership Director, “He is a rooster with a lot of ambition.”

Roosters are popular spiritual animals in many cultures. In the Chinese calendar, the rooster is a symbol of fidelity and punctuality. In some Native American traditions, the rooster teaches a person to use their voice for good. They are high-energy and immensely passionate. A rooster awakens you to unexpected possibilities and opportunities. They are loud, long winded, and repetitive.

It has now been eight years since the Herd was introduced. Perhaps it is time to reinvigorate the herd and share how each state uses their unique mascot.

Our other mascots have symbolism of their own that can be utilised to promote our Grange activities. There is value in using these mascots to represent our organization as a diverse herd that works together for the greater good.

Editorial: What does the Board do?

BY LYNETTE SCHAEFFER
Member, National Grange Board of Directors

During 2020/2021, the National Grange Board of Directors held eight meetings with two of them being two-day sessions, one via Zoom and one in person in at National Grange Headquarters. Three were special meetings.

Members of the National Grange Board of Directors (also known as the Executive Committee) are Steve Coye, Betsy Huber, Susan Noah (Secretary) , Phil Prelli (Chair), Lynette Schaeffer, and Leroy Watson.

Did you know we also elect two members to serve on the Grange Advocacy Board ? Phil and Leroy Watson fill those positions, and National Grange President Betsy Huber also serves on that Board.

The Board reviews and discusses a written report from each staff member and director. To me, it is interesting to see what they have been doing, their plans to grow their departments, insight into their plans for the National Grange and how what they are doing has an effect on work of the Order.

At these meetings, plus two spe-

cial meetings with State Presidents, the Board discussed...
the building, engineering reports, diversity efforts, State Granges, the building, investment policy (Merrill Lynch), new auditor, Small Business 401K Program, the building, staff and director reports, upcoming National Grange Sessions, the building, online access to Manuals, e-membership, selection of the site for the 2024 convention, the building, welcomed Kennedy Gwin/goodbye Joe Stefenoni, welcomed Amanda Brozana Rios to another position and welcomed Sean O’Neil full-time, said goodbye to Kennedy, the building, met with auditors,

vendor contracts, and held special meetings with the State Presidents about the **BUILDING**.
It was great to have a two-day meeting in August at the headquarter – *in person!* We got to see the newly-remodeled conference room. They were working on the lobby updates while we were there.
Just a small review of some of what your National Grange Executive Committee has done in the last year.
By the way... did I mention we talked about *the building*?

DAILY PUZZLE

WORD FIND

COMMUNICATIONS
CONVENTION
DELEGATES
GOLD
GRANGE
JUNIORS
NATIONAL
OFFICERS
PATRONS
SESSION

I A N J H B S N S D T U W Z N
T H B U T G N R A N R C F V G
P N X L C A O M O T O N Q F O
P S G W N S I I O O I R P U R
D E L E G A T E S F E O T J F
D L V P H N A W V F G D N A M
V C A T E D C M J I N V I A P
C C U V U F I U L C A N K B L
D O N W B D N T Q E R C G F C
Y O N R Z I U U O R G J P J C
C J B R O H M Q Y S G O L D D
U X L R G V M N O I S S E S U
T L S Y N T O G N I W K Y R E
Q V G X M P C M Y F B J V H Q
E W Z O X M Z H P W T M A Y P

Youth embraces role among Delegates

BY SASHA SECOR
Communications Fellow

Brittney Oliver from Warden, Washington is serving as John Trimble Legislative Youth Delegate for the 2021 National Grange Convention.

The John Trimble Youth Legislative Experience provides the opportunity for Grange Youth to attend the convention as a non-voting Delegate. Applications are open to youth who are over age 16 with an interest in the Grange legislative process.

This program gives participating youth or young adults a look into the inner workings of committees and the grassroots legislative policy development effort at the National Grange Convention.

Oliver is serving on the Transportation and Labor committee as well as working as a youth staff assistant.

Having been elected to the Executive Committee of the Washington State Grange in June, Oliver wanted to experience more of the legislative process, and to see how other Boards of Directors operate and how the National Grange handles certain issues.

Oliver hopes to bring new ideas back to her home state so they may be better equipped to handle their own issues in

a more productive manner.
Oliver has been involved with her State Grange for quite some time as well as National Grange, but has never been able to really sit and watch the legislative portion of National Session.
Going into the role, she knew that she was going to be tasked with certain responsibilities such as sitting in on committee and being present for all of the work.
This year especially, she knew that the building would be a big topic of discussion.

She is a Licensed Professional Civil Engineer at Western Pacific Engineering & Survey, Inc., where she is “very

much” immersed in problems like the National Grange is facing regarding the headquarters in Washington, D.C.
Oliver said due to her field of work, this type of situation is her “bread and butter”.
Though not born into Grange, Brittney has been heavily involved since about 10 years old so she has definitely grown up in the Grange environment, being a fourth generation Granger.
At age 15, she attended state sessions and continued to grow within her state. She feels very lucky to have had such great support and be able to now work with the people who supported her as she’s gone on her journey through the Grange.

Oliver also served as the Outstanding Young Patron for the 2018-2019 term, a goal she reached with the support of her local and State Granges. Her husband, Jonathan Pittman, served as Trimble Legislative Youth in 2019.

Mandy Bostwick, National Grange Youth Development Director, says that Oliver “is a strong leader for Youth across the country, a great voice to represent youth and young adults as the National Grange sets legislative priorities that could affect generations to come.”



Brittney Oliver
Photo Provided