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Gov. Gregoire, Agriculture Director Newhouse call D.C. trade mission 'tremendous success'

Governor, Newhouse and agriculture industry leaders meet with Obama administration members

OLYMPIA – Gov. Chris Gregoire and Washington Department of Agriculture Director Dan Newhouse have completed a trade mission to Washington, D.C., where they met with key members of the Obama administration to discuss our state's agriculture industry.

"This is a first for us — to bring a trade mission to Washington, D.C.," Gregoire said. "Washington is not always thought of as a state with a large agriculture industry. This trip was about meeting with federal leaders to strengthen our partnership and to bring a new understanding of the importance of our agriculture industry and the unique challenges we face in Washington state."

"During our discussions, we were able to impress upon the Cabinet the importance of agriculture to economic development in Washington," Newhouse said. "The food and agriculture industry is a leading employer in communities throughout the state, so the success of our farms is critical. By establishing these relationships with key officials in the new administration, we're laying the groundwork for solutions to unresolved issues that threaten the viability of farming and ranching."

Gregoire and Newhouse met with several Cabinet members, including Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and Commerce Secretary Gary Locke. They also had discussions with Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, Labor Secretary Hilda Solis and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson. Topics included labor, water and transportation issues, the impacts of climate change and salmon runs.

In their conversations, Gregoire and Newhouse extended invitations to visit Washington state, which were accepted by every Cabinet secretary.

"This is a tremendous educational opportunity for us," Gregoire said. "I am pleased that so many members of the Obama administration are willing to meet with us and learn more about what Washington agriculture offers to our nation and the world."

Accompanying Gregoire and Newhouse were Supervalu International President Charles Witzleben, Sakuma Brothers President and co-owner Steve Sakuma, Washington Grain Alliance Chief Executive Officer Tom Mick, Northwest Horticulture Council President Christian Schlect,

Washington State Potato Commission Executive Director Chris Voigt and Yakima Valley Growers-Shippers Association Executive Director Keith Mathews.

“I want to applaud Governor Gregoire and Director Newhouse for their leadership,” said Voigt. “We’ve brought many issues to our congressional leaders in the past, and appreciate their work. But having the governor and the director with us opened many new doors, and ensures that we have an open line of communication with the Obama administration to tackle the issues impacting our growers.”

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