Conversation about the Exciting Future of Science and Discovery: Andre-Denis Wright, Ph.D.

As drones for agriculture increase in popularity and self-driving cars become a common reality, the changes we've experienced over the past 50 years will pale in comparison to what our youth will witness in the next 50.

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Communication Director

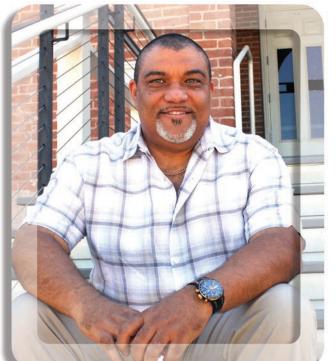
ndre-Denis Wright, Ph.D., is a Professor and Director of the School of Animal and Comparative Biomedical Sciences at The University of Arizona. Before coming to The University of Arizona, he was Professor and Department Chair in the Department of Animal Science at the University of Vermont with joint

appointments with the Department of Medicine, and the Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics.

Prior to the University of Vermont he was a Research Group Leader at the Australian Government's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO). Dr. Wright's internationally recognized research uses cutting-edge molecular techniques, such as pyrosequencing and metagenomics to examine the microbiome of the gastrointestinal tract to better understand the interactions between host genetics, immune responses, and the gut microbiota, which are largely unexplored.

As a result, Dr. Wright has been developing strategies to increase the efficiency of nutrient utilization in livestock and to raise the level of production of food in an ecologically sustainable way (i.e., decrease enteric methane). Several years ago, his research interests expanded to also include human gut microbiology.

Dr. Wright received his Ph.D. from the University of Guelph in Canada, and has published over 102 peerreviewed papers, 18 book chapters, and 98 conference papers. He serves on the Editorial Boards for 5 journals and in 2008, he had a ciliated protozoan named after him, Apokeronopsis wrighti, in recognition of his contributions to microbiology.



Professor and Director of the School of Animal and Comparative Biomedical Sciences at the University of Arizona, Dr. Andre-Denis Wright suggests that both animal and crop

Knowing he wanted to be a scientist and astronaut as a young boy, Dr. Wright was inspired to pursue biology as a result of a medical incident his mother struggled with.

His love of science continued to grow as inspiring mentors and additional life experiences kept driving him to the academic specialties he has developed to date.

The University of Arizona is blessed to have Dr. Wright. One thing is for certain, any aspiring U of A student will have a promise of a great education if they pursue Animal and Comparative Biomedical Sciences. Arizona agriculture will have the promise of a great future in animal agriculture.

Arizona Agriculture: What inspired your interest in science?

Dr. Wright: I was 4 years old when Neil Armstrong walked on the moon and I remember listening to this historic broadcast on the radio with my mother. That same year, I started watching the original series of Star Trek (on our black and white TV), and when I was 10, I watched another show called *Space 1999*. I was 12 when the first Star Wars movie came out in 1977 and I already knew I wanted to study science and be an astronaut. As time went on, I took all science courses in high school and performed well in physics, math, and biology.

When I was 16, I joined the Royal Canadian Air Cadets and spent many hours flying in gliders, single engine airplanes and helicopters. After High School, I joined the Cadet Instructor's List and got my commission as an officer in the Canadian Air Force. At that same time, I was also a freshman at Saint Mary's Uni-

See SCIENCE AND DISCOVERY Page 4

Arizona Agriculture's 2017 Priority Issues

By Ana Kennedy Otto and Joe Sigg, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Team

Regulatory

here is never a time that there isn't some issue we are working to address. However in effort to focus our resources, as each New Year begins, the Arizona Farm Bureau Board of Directors establishes a list of priority issues.

> Below is the 2017 list which includes both state and federal issues the organization will be tackling. There is always the possibility of other issues rising to the forefront, but in the meantime we will work diligently on that which the Board has set precedence.

Reform: Regulatory reform at the federal level is a high priority of American Farm Bureau, Arizona and Bureau Farm would expect to contribute to that effort. At the same time, Arizona the Department of Agriculture is their opening

rules as to what

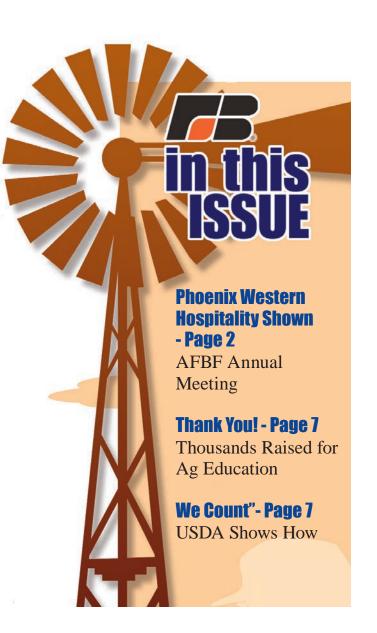
makes sense and

what does not.



Speculating on the political landscape in the coming year, Copper State Consulting Group President Stan Barnes and Vianovo Partner Billy Moore visit with Arizona Farm Bureau President Kevin Rogers after their session at the American Farm Bureau Annual Meeting in Phoenix last month on "Exploring the New Political Landscape." All agreed that much about this New Year will be unpredictable.

See 2017 PRIORITIES Page 7



Arizona Hosts the Biggest Farmer Rancher Party in America

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Communication and Organization Director

o you remember what your mom said about entertaining your guests? Don't forget to be welcoming, provide comfortable, clean space, take them around the hood and send them off with a parting gift.

That and more was accomplished during American Farm Bureau's 2017 Annual Convention held January 6th through the 11th in Phoenix for the first time in more than 20 years.

While host-state Arizona Farm Bureau can identify several highlights of this year's event, the Arizona Trail in the IDEAg Trade Show was perhaps the most memorable. All 13 active Arizona Farm Bureau counties pooled their resources and told the Arizona agriculture story through an Arizona Trail featuring every aspect of our state's agriculture

But our Arizona Trail is only one of the amazing stories behind the convention.



Arizona Farm Bureau's 13 active Farm Bureau counties pooled resources to tell Arizona Agriculture's unique story during the 2017 Annual Convention of the American Farm Bureau in the trade show area in downtown Phoenix, last

Arizona Farm Bureau's Young Farmers and Ranchers Competitors Make Their Mark!

Winners of the Young Farmers & Ranchers Achievement Award, Discussion Meet and Excellence in Agriculture competitions were announced last month at the American Farm Bureau Federation's 2017 Annual Convention & IDEAg Trade Show. Young farmers and ranchers from around the country competed for the awards by demonstrating knowledge of and achievement in agriculture, as well as commitment to promoting the agriculture industry.

Arizona Farm Bureau's Katie Hanger competed in the Discussion Meet and while not making the Sweet Sixteen made the competition very competitive for all par-

The three runners-up in the Excellence in Agriculture competition are Wayne and Melonie Brinkerhoff of Utah,

Terisha and Brian McKeighen of Arizona and Seth and Lyndsay Earl of Michigan. Each runner-up received a Case IH Farmall 50A tractor courtesy of Case IH, and \$3,000 in cash and STIHL merchandise, courtesy of STIHL.

The Excellence in Agriculture Award recognizes young farmers and ranchers who do not derive the majority of their income from an agricultural operation, but who actively contribute and grow through their involvement in agriculture, their leadership ability and participation in Farm Bureau and other organizations.

"It was very exciting and an honor to represent Arizona in the YF&R Excellence in Ag Competition," explained Terisha McKeighen. "We would not have made it as far as we did had it not been for the support of Farm Bureau and Christy Davis, our YF&R State Coordinator."

Arizona Recognized for Excellence

State Farm Bureaus were presented awards at the American Farm Bureau Federation's 2017 Annual Convention. The awards recognized excellence in implementation of outstanding member programs and membership achievement in 2016.

The Awards of Excellence are awarded to state Farm Bureaus that demonstrate outstanding achievements in six program areas: Education and Outreach; Leadership Development; Member Benefits; Membership Initiatives; Policy Development and Implementation; and Public Relations and Communications.

Arizona won in all six categories: Education and Outreach; Leadership Development; Member Benefits; Membership Initiatives; Policy Development and Implementation; and Public Relations and Communications including two President's Awards.

Arizona's Terisha and Brian McKeighen were selected Excellence in Agriculture runners-up. The runner-ups received a Case IH Farmall 50A tractor courtesy of Case IH, and \$3,000 in cash and STIHL merchandise, courtesy of STIHL.

The Political Landscape and other Arizona **Hosted Workshops**

The election of Donald Trump as president of the United States has ushered in a whole new political landscape, which was discussed during a workshop at the American Farm Bureau Federation 2017 Annual Convention & IDEAg Trade Show in Phoenix.

"What we thought was impossible politically is now possible," said Stan Barnes, president, Copper State Consulting Group in Phoenix. "We're not in a normal world." Barnes, a former Arizona state legislator, was joined by Billy Moore, political strategist with Vianovo. Together, they took on a deep-dive into the impacts of the election, issues facing the president and Congress and implications for the first 100 days.

Additionally, Arizona Farm Bureau's Ag Education Director Katie Aikins gave her now well-known "Biotech What the Heck" Presentation during the convention. Plus, Buckeye Dairy Farmer Wes Kerr presented a workshop called "Genetics Made Easy." Both were very well attended.

See PARTY Page 5

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Science and Discovery continued from page 1

versity (SMU) (in my hometown, Halifax, Nova Scotia), majoring in mathematics.

However, at the end of my sophomore year, my mother suffered a serious back accident and required surgery with a risk of never walking again. The surgery was somewhat successful and she was able to walk again. After months of consultations with the doctors, I realized that I loved biology and that my passion was helping people to lead healthy lives. So, at the start of my junior year, I switched my major to biology and my new focus was to go to Medical School. I had an amazing mentor at SMU, Dr. David Cone, who got me involved as an undergraduate researcher in his lab. I discovered that I loved doing research and finding the answers to unanswered questions.

After I graduated with my BS in Biology, I wanted to pursue graduate studies at the University of Guelph (45 min west of Toronto). So, I also retired as a Captain from the Air Force and moved 1,150 miles to Guelph, Ontario to attend one of the top Agricultural Universities in Canada. I did my MS degree with Dr. Denis Lynn on the rates of evolution in parasites and their free-living relatives (I now teach the "Biology of Parasites" at U of A). I published my first paper in 1995 and seeing my name in print for the first time was a career changing experience. After earning my MS, I worked at the Ontario Veterinary College for a year before starting my PhD with my former MS advisor. Dr. Lynn was an amazing advisor and mentor. He has had a huge influence on my success as a scientist and my development as a teacher, advisor, and mentor.

After graduating in 1998, with my PhD on the gut microorganisms of cattle, sheep, and kangaroos, I went off to do my post-doctoral fellowship at Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) in Perth, Western Australia. There, I worked on developing DNA markers to identify changes in the rumen of sheep and cattle to evaluate the efficacy of a range of different vaccine formulations, formulated to reduce methane emissions from livestock.

In 2000, I became a Project Leader and was made a permanent research scientist with the Australian Government. A few months later, I also learned that my mother had stage 4 colorectal cancer. Sadly, she lost her battle with cancer 11 months later (April, 2001). After my mom's passing, I returned to Australia with a new resolve to develop a better diagnostic tool. Because I was using DNA markers to identify changes in the microbial community in the rumen of cattle and sheep, I started developing similar methods to identify microbial changes in the human colon during the onset of colorectal cancer, Crohn's disease, and diverticulosis. The rest is history. My research interests here at the U of A still include making livestock animals more efficient and environmentally sustainable, and to identify biomarkers for the early detection and diagnosis of colonic diseases.

Arizona Agriculture: Tell our readers about your research and development of a breath test that detects colon cancer.

Dr. Wright: Methane producing microorganisms, called methanogens, are implicated in pathogenic gastrointestinal disorders in humans including colorectal cancer, inflammatory bowel disease, irritable bowel syndrome, obesity, and anorexia. Measurement of the concentration of methane in human breath has been considered to be an accurate surrogate for the presence of bacteria-like methanogens in the colon. My research uses DNA from human stool samples and corresponding breath samples from

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the same individuals to determine relationships between the numbers of these bacterialike methanogens and the concentration of methane in human breath. Simply stated, these the bacteria-like methanogens produce methane gas in the colon, which is absorbed by the circulatory system and carried to the lungs, where the methane gas is released during exhaling.

Our research found a direct relationship between the density of these methanogens in the human colon and concentration of breath methane. As the numbers of these bacteria-like methanogens increase in the human colon, so does the concentration of methane in the breath. We also found an inverse relationship between the biodiversity of the methanogens and breath methane in healthy individuals. As biodiversity of the methanogens increase, the concentration of breath methane decreases. There is still much research to do before a reliable test is available on the market to determine if someone is at high risk of developing a colonic disease.

Arizona Agriculture: You mentioned that you're truly excited for your daughter as we now live in the most exciting time for students of science. Explain?

Dr. Wright: My daughter is in grade 5 and she is building robots and programming them to do specific tasks, and is already using a 3-D printer to make items. She is doing things as a 10-year old that I have not yet experienced. As I previously mentioned, when I was my daughter's age, I would gaze in awe when Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock would use their communicators and replicators and other futuristic gadgets. Now, most of these items from the TV future are a reality with the use of smartphones, tablets, and 3-D printers.

As drones are increasing in popularity and self-driving cars are becoming available, the changes that I have experience over the past 45 years will pale in comparison to what my daughter will witness over the next 45 years. She can't wait to have a transporter and to travel at the speed of light.

Arizona Agriculture: What areas in agriculture, whether crop or animal, will be or currently show the most promise for even further advancement?

Dr. Wright: Both areas of agriculture have great promise for advancement. This is increasingly important as we need to move towards doubling food production, using existing land, to feed 9 to 10 billion people by 2050.

Arizona Agriculture: How can we get more young people excited about science?

Dr. Wright: We can get more young people excited about science by exposing them to activities that are fun and exciting. Most do not realize that they already use science and scientific advancements daily in their regular routines. My daughter and her classmates are learning and using science every day. Science is not meant to be scary. The School of Animal and Comparative Biomedical Sciences at UA has a STEM extension specialist, Dr. Jerry Lopez, who is engaging with 4-H groups around the state and putting on workshops and camps to get students involved in hands-on learning in different STEM areas. We hope this hands-on exposure to science will help excite and motivate students to consider careers in STEM fields.

Arizona Agriculture: How should young people prepare for a career in the hard

Dr. Wright: Those with a passion for science should continue that passion with active learning. Young people should be inquisitive, ask questions, read books and articles, and participate in experiential learning. Their parents, or caregivers, should encourage and support them, and their teachers should recognize students who are eager to learn and give them appropriate challenges that will increase their understanding and fuel their curiosity, but not drive them away science.

Arizona Agriculture: Recently a well-educated friend of mine said, "Agriculture has become too science-based." She's fully bought into the American Gothic idea of farming. How can we change the perception that science is bad for agriculture?

Dr. Wright: We need to do a better job to educate the public that without science, there would not be enough food or plant and animal products to feed today's population. Plant and animal genetics, and biology have allowed us to produce more and more, with less and less. The only way to feed a growing population sustainably, without significantly increasing costs of production, is to use scientific advances. Scientists do a great job talking to other scientists and publishing our findings in scientific journals, but we spend minimal time talking to non-scientists and consumers.

Arizona Agriculture: We've talked extensively in this magazine about the future the vet school at U of A, but not as much about what it will mean for the agriculture industry in our state. Can you share some thoughts on this?

Dr. Wright: It will provide an opportunity for Arizona students to remain in Arizona to get their degree in Veterinary medicine and to stay here after graduation to practice animal health. Students will enjoy reduced tuition, compared to most other Veterinary Schools, with further savings by completing their DVM degree 1-2 years sooner than going somewhere else. With potentially smaller student loans than going out of state, Arizona students may be financially more able to return to their hometowns, or to rural areas, to work with agricultural animals. 🚜



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Party

continued from page 2

Women's Leadership

Sherry Saylor was reelected Chair for the AFBF Women's Leadership Committee. Continued focus on sharpening leadership skills is critically important for Farm Bureau members and volunteer leaders, according to national Women's Leadership Committee Chair Sherry Saylor, an Arizona crop farmer.

Saylor encouraged Farm Bureau women to engage and connect more with consum-



Reelected Chair for the AFBF Women's Leadership Committee, Sherry Saylor continues a focus on sharpening leadership skills because it's critically important for Farm Bureau members and volunteer leaders.

ers in the coming year. She made her remarks to the American Farm Bureau Women at AFBF's 2017 Annual Convention & IDEAg Trade Show in Phoenix that ran through January 11th.

"Take advantage of every opportunity to increase your skills in successfully articulating messages about farming and ranching," Saylor urged attendees. "It's important to establish credibility in relationships so people will come talk to us – farmers – about food and agriculture."

Citing a mantra of

John Calipari, head basketball coach at the University of Kentucky, she added, "Success in any business is based on relationship, trust and respect – great advice for farmers as they interact with consumers."

The 2017 Policy Roadmap

Delegates to the American Farm Bureau Federation's 2017 Annual Convention today approved a host of public policy measures designed to help assure a prosperous future for farmers, ranchers and everyone who depends on them for food, fuel and fiber.

Delegates covered the full range of agriculture policy over the day-long session. Resolutions passed included important measures covering regulatory reform, crop insurance, the inclusion of food assistance in the upcoming farm bill, school nutrition, biotechnology, energy and more.

"The actions taken today by our farmer and rancher delegates from across the nation represent the culmination of our year-long grassroots policy process," said AFBF President Zippy Duvall. "It also provides us a roadmap for actions AFBF will take to implement our policies throughout this year, and I am optimistic about those prospects."

Regulatory Reform

Delegates approved policy supporting regulatory reform, including legislation to eliminate "judicial deference," which has essentially nullified the power of the courts to serve as a check on agency abuses.

Also on the topic of regulations, delegates approved policy to oppose agency advocacy campaigns in support of their own proposed regulations.

Delegates passed a <u>sense-of-the-body resolution</u> calling for comprehensive regulatory reform, driving home the importance of the issue for farmers and ranchers.

New language was approved to require the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other federal agencies to coordinate and cooperate in a meaningful way with state and local governments in making land management plans and decisions as required by Congress. They also supported mandatory recusal for federal officers who face conflicts of interest in their work.

Hunger and Nutrition

Delegates overwhelmingly approved language supporting efforts to fund nutrition programs including food assistance and school lunches through the same, unified farm

bill that funds farm safety-net pro-

Delegates also called on Congress to support incorporating all types of domestic fruits and vegetables into the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program for schools. Delegates supported the use of fresh and locally grown product when available.

Farm Support

Delegates reaffirmed strong support for risk-management and safety-net tools to defend against volatile commodity markets.

Immigration

Delegates reaffirmed support for flexibility in the H-2A program that would allow workers to seek employment from more than one farmer.



Arizona's own pastor-at-large, Gary Kinnaman, hosted the Sunrise Service during the American Farm Bureau's 2017 Annual Convention and IDEAg Trade Show. He spoke of the Bible's agrarian foundation.

Big Data

Delegates reaffirmed support for the protection of proprietary data collected from farmers, voting that farmers should be compensated when their data is used by third parties. Delegates also supported sale of proprietary data to third parties.



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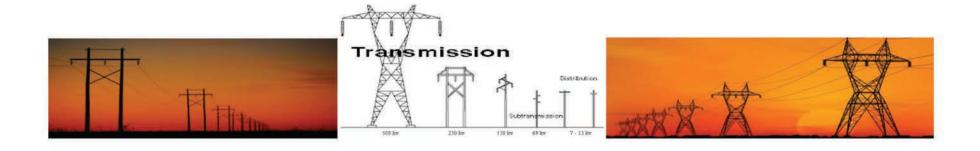




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2017 Priorities continued from page 1

Tort Reform: We will be re-visiting the issue of tort reform at the state level to see if there are new opportunities for legislation.

Water: As varied as our water issues are across the state, we expect any number of water issues this upcoming

session. To the old adage that all politics is local, we add: "... all water politics is local ..."

Wild Horse and Burro and Endangered Species Act: We expect issues will arise with wild horses, wild burros, wildfire and endangered species - all at federal agency levels.

Taxes: We will look for opportunities to strengthen agricultural tax classifica-

Local Zoning and Ag Definitions: We are seeing increasing infringements on agriculture by local communities and more time will need to be spent in discussions with zoning and council officials on these issues. Concurrently, we need to see if we can create opportunities to have more inclusive definitions of agriculture in state statutes.

Trade: Agriculture has considerable work ahead to re-educate the public and congress as to the importance of trade issues. Trade was one of the casualties of this current campaign season and must be re-positioned to move forward.

Visa Reform: As always we will seek ways to create an appropriate climate for discussion of visa reform.

Word of Thanks

very year, Arizona Farm Bureau Educational Farming Company raises funds for the ag-related youth programs that we support. This year, we raised more than \$37,760. We extend a hearty "Thank You" to the many donors that contributed either through our letter writing campaign or through a special grant. Your generous donation to the Educational Farming Company helped us reach our goal of connecting with more than 75,000 students, teachers and parents.

We could not do our educational outreach without you. Your donation is making a world of difference for our youth and our ag-



related outreach to the community! This school year we believe we can reach 120,000 students, parents and teachers.

Please consider a donation in 2017! If you'd still like to donate, you can go online to azfb.org and under programs find the "donor" button on the "Educational Farming Company" page. Or simply write a check to Arizona Farm Bureau Educational Farming Company to 325 South Higley Road, Gilbert, Arizona, 85296. For questions and further information about our program, contact Katie Aikins at 480.635.3607.

Arizona Agriculture's Numbers Guy Shows that We Count!

By Dave DeWalt, State Statistician, USDA National Agricultural Statistics ServiceMountain Region - Arizona Field Office (Phoenix): A review of 2016 showed that Julie Murphree, the Arizona Farm Bureau's Communications and Organization Director, requested Arizona agriculture statistical data from me on more than a dozen occasions.

'n 2016, I provided Julie with statistics on locally grown commodities, milk production, organic farming, alfalfa, cash receipts, cotton, small grains, and even bio-tech crops. In other words, quite a variety of information. Additionally, Julie re-tweeted several commodity charts that I had posted every time a new Arizona forecast or estimate was released from our office.

One tweet resulted in an opportunity for Arizona Farm Bureau to answer the question from an east coast citizen "Why do they plant cotton in the desert?" I provided Julie with Arizona's statistical information about cotton and Julie prepared a well written response.

It is my duty as the Arizona State Statistician and my pleasure as an agriculture industry supporter to provide Arizona agricultural statistics to anyone who asks. Julie is great to work with and has been gracious for the work the USDA NASS Arizona Field Office does for Arizona agriculture.

I am thankful that the Farm Bureau understands the importance of the data we provide and uses the data to promote Arizona agriculture to all.

The Arizona farmers and ranchers are the source of this abundance of statistical information and I am thankful to all of them for providing information about their farms and ranches to our enumerators. As always, all information provided by Arizona's farmers and ranchers are held strictly confidential, by law. Confidentiality and security have been one of our major responsibilities and promises to farmers and ranchers since Abraham Lincoln was president.

Your agriculture contribution to the state is essential. When you're counted, we can accurately tell your Arizona agriculture story.

I wish all in the Arizona agricultural community a joyous holiday season and a prosperous 2017. 🚜



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Minimum Wage Just Got a Raise

By Joe Sigg, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Director

our friends and neighbors [to be exact, 58% of those voting] decided your employees should have a pay raise. That's the problem with these things ... I get to do what I think is the "right" thing, but I don't have to pay for it. It's part of the great scramble to make the other fellow pay! If it truly is a good thing, then all taxpayers should pay for it, but that's an argument for another day.

The voters opted to raise the minimum wage to \$10.00 per hour on private employers as of January 1. For each succeeding year, this will rise to \$10.50 [2018], \$11.00 [2019] and then \$12.00 as of 2020. After 2020, minimum wage is tied to an inflation index, unless, of course, the voters in their infinite wisdom do some other initiative or sort.

Employees relying on a portion of their wages from tips can be paid up to \$3 less than \$10.00 per hour. And "yes" the minimum wage applies to part-time employees, and if a person is being paid a salary, as opposed to an hourly wage, the equivalent cannot be less than \$10.00 per hour.

You likely noticed in the news certain business organizations have filed a court suit to stop this new minimum wage. The outcome will not be known until sometime in February. Nevertheless, as of January 1st the Arizona minimum wage is \$10.00 per hour.

The Obama administration had also put forth a new rule dealing with overtime, but that whole business is on hold pending a federal court decision in Texas, so put a pin in that one for the time being. And regardless of the ultimate legal decision agriculture will still have its exemption on overtime.

But wait – there's more! Come July 1, 2017 your employees will be eligible for earned paid sick leave, courtesy of the voters. There are many details which will come later, but for the moment here is how this will be structured:



- Employees will accrue earned paid sick leave at 1 hour for every 30 hours worked, but those working for employers with 15 or more employees can accrue up to 40 hours of sick leave.
- Employees working for employers with fewer than 15 employees accrue at one hour for every 30 worked, but accruals max out at 24 hours.
- If you fluctuate back and forth over 15 employees and you have over 15 employees for some portion of 20 weeks over the year, your employees will accrue at the 40 hour level. [And yes, you are now starting to think about the additional record-keepin requirements this involves.]
- The accrued hours cannot be carried over year-to-year, so hu man nature being the way it is ... of course they will be used ... sick or not.
- Part-time employees accrue sick leave at the same rates as fulltime employees, i.e. 1 hour of accrual for every 30 hours worked.
- Finally, a part-time employee counts as "1" if you are trying to figure out the number of employees you have under this requirement.

Again, there are some other nuances we will post you on in a few weeks, but I am visiting with a labor attorney to make certain I have these other things correct in my mind.

I live for questions, so please contact me at joesigg@azfb.org and I will get right back to you. Stay tuned as Arizona Farm Bureau is planning a day-long workshop on labor issues in the near future.

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