The State Grange Headquarters is closed until further notice. Due to Corona virus

Grange Trip
canton, Ohio

It is not necessary to set up an account to access the Grange Week material. There is no “one thing” that should be done during the month. Window displays work in some places, not in others. If a public event can be held, try it out, even if it is not possible to get it in before the end of April. It is the event, not the time of the event that is the most important. Grange Month is an excellent focus time, however, and we should be looking for opportunities to publicize our work. Perhaps a “year in review” article for the local newspaper would be good, highlighting your projects, or possibly a social media campaign doing the same.

April is also the time of year here in the Northeast that the spring renewal becomes the most evident. Spring flowers are in bloom, tree leaves are taking shape from the buds, and new grass is rapidly overtaking the remnants of the winter kill. This would definitely be a time for us to review the lessons of the First Degree of our Order, as it should refresh our minds and spirits as to the relationship between this season of the year and the objects of our organization. Knowing what we are about is key to wanting to be involved. Perhaps some of the information contained therein will be a new revelation to you, thus making you aware of what was before a secret to you. (There is nothing mystical about the word “secret” when used in connection with our Grange work as it just means that you now know something you didn’t know before.) Traditionally membership campaigns were held in the spring of the year, most likely because of the relationship of the newness of nature coupled with the desire of the heart of venture into new endeavors and relationships. While it is definitely a good time to stage a campaign, I would submit that in this day and age it has to be an ongoing

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That’s the Grange way!
Cindy Benson-Pollard

Spring is in the air. Flowers will be blooming, bees buzzing and warmer temperatures will all help to cheer up the spirits from the winter doldrums we have all had. Are you using the legislative work of the Grange as fertilizer to help you Grange grow? It really helps, you know.

The State Legislature is busy with its work in Albany. By the time you receive this paper, the budget should have been passed. There are other issues that are being talked about as well. As bills come up for votes, I am sending out email blasts for your help. By writing to your Senator and Assemblymen, we let them know that Grangers are thinking and you are taking part in our government and its workings. If you are not on our email list, please let us know. We will be glad to add you to the listing that we have.

How are you doing with resolutions? As of this writing, I have not received any for this year. If you need help writing one, please let me know, I will be glad to help you. Just a couple of reminders when writing a resolution. Try to keep your whereas sections to no more than four or five. Too many whereas sections just convolute what you are trying to say. Be sure the resolved is a complete and can stand alone.

Again, if you need help, be sure to let me know.

It is also time to start thinking about the annual Legislative Day. If you have any suggestions for speakers that you would like to hear from, please let me know. I am always open to suggestions. Keep watching this column for further details as we get closer to the day.

Remember, a single snowflake is harmless but when they all work together, look what they can do.

What do you think:

Here are discussion topics for your legislative report. I hope that you find them useful.

- The current farm labor bill requires a 60-hour work week before overtime is earned. The wage labor board is meeting to consider lowering that threshold. Is it too soon to do that when the legislation when in effect January 1st of this year?
- Should the 60-hour work week for farm laborers be decreased?
- Has the war with China affected you? Has it affected you?
- Is Medicare for all a realistic plan to fix our health care system?
- Should we set an age limit for candidates running for an elected position in any level of government?

If you have any topics for discussion, let me know.

Community Involvement

Sherri Taft

Brenda Noble

I hope everyone is staying healthy! Because of all the cancellations to keep everyone well, the Cooperative Extension for Greenhouse Entomology in Cortland has been cancelled. We will still have judging in Cortland in April, so entries are being accepted in Cortland by April 15th. There was an error in the last issue: the Quilt will be Full size. The Handbook is correct. We are looking forward to seeing the entries for this year. The judges always enjoy coming and seeing all the great work everyone does.

Remember, a single snowflake is harmless but when they all work together, look what they can do.

Our country is in the middle of a pandemic and as a Grange, how can we help our communities? Do you have elderly members or neighbors that are home-bound and afraid to go out to get their groceries or medicine? Perhaps members of your Grange could do their shopping or pick up their medicine and deliver it to the individuals. Perhaps cook a meal or make some baked goods and deliver what you have made and visit with the elderly or homebound. You can still practice social distancing while visiting. This is a great community service and is very helpful to the elderly or home-bound during this time of crisis in our country.

As Grangers, we need to help our communities even more during this time. Hopefully by this time this edition of the Empire State Granger reaches your mailbox, life will have returned to some semblance of normalcy. If not, please find ways to help out in your community and be sure to include all that you do in your Community Service Report.

If you have a community service event already planned, please be sure to abide by the guidelines given by the health department to make sure your event is successful and safe to all participants. We need to let our communities know that the Grange is here to help as needed. Provide as much assistance to your community as you are able during this time.

- Have a safe and healthy spring!

March 2020

Sherri Taft

Ryan Orton

“Grange Camp was so much fun last year! I cannot wait to get the information so I can register for Grange Camp 2020!” Well, wait no more! Information for Grange Camp 2020 was mailed out the last week of February and the information is also on the New York State Grange website for everyone to enjoy. Grange Camp. Feel free to print off or make as many copies as needed to have enough for all campers coming to camp. Grange Camp is open to all Grangers and non-Grangers aged 7 – 18 years of age. July 19 – 24, 2020 will be a week of fun for all camp attendees. Along with the activities from last year, some new and exciting activities are being planned. Please send your registration form, Code of Conduct form, health form, a recent photo of the camper, and a non-refundable $50.00 deposit to: Sherri Taft 12544 Ira Station Road Cato, New York 13033. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Sherri Taft at 315-380-2294.

Ryan Orton at 845-868-7869 or Email: camp@nysgrange.org.

We look forward to seeing all of the returning campers as well as many new faces!

(Continued from page 1) Master process because of societal changes.

Let us all do our best to make the quote at the beginning of this column no longer relevant, starting right now, during this month, and continuing throughout the year. The rewards will be well worth the effort.

Now is the time!!!

Across the country states are achieving a net gain in membership. Many have made this goal repeatedly in the last few years. New York State is within easy reach of a net gain in membership it will only take each Grange in the state to gain one new member. Let the Pennsylvania National Grange Session be the one when New York will be on the list.

Be a star and add a few new members to your Grange. The New York State Grange would like to join several others and have a net gain in membership. It almost happened last year.

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March April 2020

NEW YORK STATE GRANGE 2020
Calendar of Events, Activities, & Dues
April 1-30 GRANGE MONTH – Plan a special public activity/event
April 15 Art/Photo Entries due at HDQ for Judging
April 15 Talent Entry Report Sheets due to the State Lecturer
April 18 Canceled
April 20 Woodworking, Quilting, & Needlework due at HDQ for Judging
April 24 Executive Committee Meeting, HDQ, 11:00 a.m.
April 24-26 Youth Spring Weekend - Canceled
April 25 Lecturer/FAC Conference - Canceled
April 26 State Dart Ball Tournament – HDQ
May 14-16 NYS FFA Convention – Syracuse
May 15 Empire State Granger Copy Due
May 16 NYS Grange Museum Cleanup Day, 10:00 a.m., Museum
May 18-21 State Grange Motor Coach Tour – Canton, Ohio Area
May 31 Empire Farm Days, Seneca Falls
June 24 Grange Camp – Camp Wyomoco, Varysburg – Details TBA
June 20 Executive Committee Meeting, 10:00 a.m., HDQ
July 10-12 NY Youth Conference – Vermont – Tentative date
July 12 State Golf Tournament – place TBA
July 15 Empire State Granger Copy Due
July 18 NYS Grange Museum Full Board Meeting & Picnic, Museum
July 19-24 Grange Camp – Camp Wyomoco, Varysburg – Details TBA
July 20 Executive Committee Meeting, 10:00 a.m., HDQ
July 29-31 Empire Farm Days, Seneca Falls
August 26 – Sept. 7 New York State Fair – Syracuse
September 1 Community Service Reports due to Director
September 1 National JG Report due
September 5 Grange Day at the NYS Fair
September 15 Empire State Granger Copy Due
September 15 Lecturer’s Reports due to State Lecturer
Sept. 18 – Oct.4 Eastern States Exposition (The Big E) – West Springfield, MA
September 25 Executive Committee – HDQ – 11:00 a.m.
September 25-27 Youth Fall Weekend – Newark Grange 366, Wayne County
September 26 State Legislative Day – HDQ
September 27 Grange Day at the Big E – West Springfield, MA
September 30 Subordinate Dues to State Secretary
October 23-27 State Grange 148th Annual Session – Corning Radisson, Corning
October 25 Museum Dinner at State Session
October 27 Executive Committee Meeting – Corning Radisson, Corning
October 27 NYS Grange Foundation Annual Meeting, Corning Radisson, Corning
November 7 NYS Grange Museum Annual Meeting, 10:00 a.m., Museum
November 15 Empire State Granger Copy Due
November 17-21 National Grange Annual Session, Valley Forge Ca-sino Resort, King of Prussia, PA
December Executive Committee Meeting – TBA
December 30 Subordinate Dues to State Secretary

888-447-2643

State Lecturer

As we all know, much of NY is shutting down, including businesses, schools, libraries, and even our Granges. State Grange events are postponed until further notice, until May 1. A decision will be made towards the end if April, but hopefully, we will be able to reschedule them soon. In the meantime, please send any entries for the Lecturer’s & FAC Conference to State Headquar-ters as usual by April 15th.

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One thing we can do in this time of crisis is take the time to focus on educating ourselves and our families. Here is a great way to have learn and fun together.

Pick something to watch, listen to, or read aloud togeth-er. It could be a nature show, a politician’s address, a book about farming, whatever. Every- body in the group gets a piece of paper divided in a five by five grid like a bingo card.

The middle square is free obviously. Each person fills in the spaces with whatever words they want. So if you are watching the news, you may want to add words like Covid, toilet paper, masks, etc. If you are watching Forged in Fire, one of my personal favorites, you add words like blade, steel and chop, etc. You could also read aloud books or magazines or listen to the radio.

As you go along, you check off the boxes when you hear the words just like bingo. There are straight lines, four corners and full card winners. Prizes can be such things as the right to choose what’s for dinner, completed chores, back rubs, spe-cial activities, staying up later for kids, anything you can think of. Search online for “creative rewards for families” for ideas.

Also, don’t forget the lost art of playing board games and cards.

Stay well and stay positive!

Chaplain’s Corner

Virginia L. Conner

TRUST AND OBEY

It seems the topic of the coronavirus has taken over our lives. Everywhere one goes – grocery store, Post Office, gas station, restaurants....the topic of conversation is always the same.

Foreign countries have warned us of the seriousness of this virus. Are we taking the warning seriously and heeding the precautions of what to do in our everyday lives? Or have we adopted a panic mode and have become like some who are buying products in such quantities that it would supply their needs for years and yet others are in need of the very same products.

What should our attitude be? How are you reacting?

I believe prayer should be our first action. Our Heavenly Father knows each of us so well; He knows us better than we know ourselves.

John 2:24, 25. Matthew 10:30 says, “the very hairs of your head are numbered”. Wow, He must know how many hairs I lose each day too?

I do not find in the Bible where our Lord had a moment of panic. He certainly was in some situations where panic could have come easily. But He didn’t allow that reaction. Therefore, we shouldn’t react to the current situation with panic.

I see our second reaction should be to trust our Heavenly Father to guide, lead and give us instructions for each of our lives. I believe by letting the Lord guide us, we will have peace in this valley of trial. We should also trust those in authority over us as stated in the 13th Chapter of Romans.

Remember the hymn, “Trust and Obey”? May the words of the hymn give you peace.

Good Day

The National Grange publishes a great magazine called “Good Day”. This magazine has a great deal to offer Grangers and the general public. It is well worth the sub-
scription price.

UNFORTUNATELY

This wonderful magazine may have to be discontinued as the subscriptions are not keeping up with the expense. It would be a shame if the magazine has to stop publication as an economy measure.

CALL THE COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT AT NA-TIONAL GRANGE

Linda Batsford (Treasurer) and Bruce Dehner (exec committee) presented dictionaries to 15 - Third Graders of DeRyter School, as part of a special presentation, in honor of “Parents as Reading partners” week.

This is the sixth year the Grange has given the dictionaries and it gives members a chance to dis-cuss the Grange with the youth and their teachers. The students had many questions and always appreciate the books.

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CALL THE COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT AT NA-TIONAL GRANGE

1-888-447-2643
On our recent ZOOM meeting of the Grange Board of Directors, Leadership Director, Joe Stefano, another state director asked a simple question which has been on my mind’s column. “Should I, she asked, invite a possible new member to a meeting or to a social gathering? And if you do, what and why? I believe I have mentioned this before in this column for you to consider, but if not, I will bring it up again.”

First of all it’s a great dilemma to have. Secondly, the more I have thought about this, the more my answer is “It depends.” There truly is no right or wrong answer. I have asked before in this column for you to think about your Grange and what reason it has for existing. Every Grange must have that. It has also been suggested that each local/subordinate Grange have a mission statement. Does yours? Your mission statement and your reason to be a Grange should be parallel and, at the least, compatible. Remember that every Grange’s mission is and will be different. Is your Grange to be the same? I believe this is a question that needs to be asked of each member before such a possible meeting is extended. This brings me to the “it depends” part. Is your Grange steeped in the ritual? Do you have members who still gape if someone forgets and walks through the sacred space between the altar and the Graces? Do you still take up the password, use secret knocks or work your way in or out of the meeting? If you do, it may be a good idea to introduce a possible new member gradually to the Grange and your meetings. If your Grange is very much a social group then either a meeting or an event would be equally okay. You should probably know what would be the person’s reason for joining. A Grange that is very active in community service is probably known in its community as such and would already be a reason for membership. Some Granges have card (or other type) groups that require Grange membership to participate. If your possible new member is politically active and wants to be involved in writing resolutions or being on a lobbying team, then invite them to a meeting where that will be the focus, if in fact your Grange does that (which it should). An important point to remember is - Asking or inviting someone to the Grange, whether to a meeting or a social event, is the most personal and delicate part of the process and increase your Grange’s membership.

I am still thinking about the levity of being in the Grange which I believe I have mentioned in previous articles. I have yet to entirely solidify the difference between a “member” of a Grange. They pay their dues and support the Grange but have no desire to attend meetings. (See my article on Associate and Affiliate membership) Another person may “join” the Grange. They pay their dues, attend an occasional meeting, and will assist at functions - as asked. Yet another “belongs” to the Grange. They will do all the previous things, but are interested in the degrees beyond just being obligated. They may attend meetings faithfully but not participate much. And then there are Grangers. A Granger’s willing and wholehearted support of the Grange from subordinate to national is a great boon to the Order. I’m sure if you think about this you will find at least one someone in each category. Hopefully membership leads to activity, which leads to involvement, which becomes leadership which culminates in Grangership.

So how is this an answer? Where do you see this potential new member in the Grange brother- and-sisterhood? What do you envision the potential of this new member for the fraternity? The final word is that even though not everyone is cut out to be a Granger, invite the person to whatever activity you think best suits them and their reason(s) for wanting to become a member of your Grange.

From the Secretary’s Corner

Roger Halbert

After several weeks of enduring an unprecedented health scare globally, we continue to be held in the grips of a yet unknown outcome. I am reminded of a charge from the Master in the First Degree: “We are walking blindly along the pathway of life, events occurring that we do not understand and often encountering difficulties and obstructions along the way, but we should press forward having Faith that God will ultimately bring us into the broad and pleasant fields of paradise.” We can only hope that we will endure and overcome this trial in the days ahead.

We trust that we can continue with a routine which calls for the annual notice of the State Convention this coming October. That will be sent out to Pomona Masters and Secretaries the first week of May. In that notice will be the delegate form for your respective Pomona Grange. The membership as verified with the March 2020 quarterly report will determine the number of delegates your Pomona can send this year. This is one reason why it is so important for each Subordinate Secretary to send in the March 2020 quarterly report on time, by May 1st.

In recent months the 2020 State Grange Directory was distributed. If you are in need of a copy contact the Cortland office and one will be sent to you. Subordinate Secretaries are reminded that the annual IRS notice should have been returned to the Cortland office by March 1st...this returned form gives State Grange permission to complete all filing requirements to the IRS office for your Grange for 2020. The Journal of Proceedings for 2019 will be a printer’s April and will be sent out to appropriate Grange leaders and to Subordinate Grangers. You are requested to meet or make contact with them when it becomes available.

We realize that Grange activities have been altered in recent months due to the coronavirus outbreak. In this time of distancing ourselves from one another, it gives us pause of the importance of staying in contact with those in our community. Invite the person not in close personal contact, but in different ways that allows us to remain watchful and tuned in to the needs of others. In the meantime, our wish for all Grange members is have courage and strength to stay the course and for us to be more appreciative of the world we find ourselves in.

We are constantly passing through the sacred space between the altar and the Graces? What is your Grange’s mission? Does your Grange have a mission statement? Does your Grange have a reason for existing? It is important for each Subordinate Grange to have a mission statement. Does your Grange have a reason for existing? Does your Grange have a reason for existing? Does your Grange have a reason for existing?

The state of the United States has been increased in the past years. The state of the United States has been increased in the past years. The state of the United States has been increased in the past years. The state of the United States has been increased in the past years. The state of the United States has been increased in the past years.
Welcome Spring!

In this time of uncertainty and unknown, we must keep strong. Even though we are staying home and practicing social distancing, there are still so many things we can do to keep Grange in the forefront of our lives and community. Remember April is Grange month.

Juniors can work on projects such as the many passports currently available. There are state as well as National program crafts and projects. There are many community activities that you can help with—cleaning neighbors yards, helping a neighbor grocery shop, calling friends on the phone to keep up to date. Social media is also another way to keep in touch. There are so many ways to keep within the guidelines we have been given for our health and safety. What you do with this time is up to you. We are Grange members. Grange is to help and teach for the betterment of ourselves mankind. We will get through this time and continue to be strong.

Carl Bullock

The State Bowling Tournament will be on Saturday, June 7th at 1:00. Please let me know as soon as possible if you will be bowling this year. My address and phone number was incorrect in the last edition of the Granger. We sold our house so my new address is 93 Chelsea Drive, Cortland, NY 13045 and my phone number is 607-283-1251.
Allegany County Pomona Grange had their annual Grange banquet at Belfast Fire Hall on January 25, 2020. A catered meal of ham and turkey was enjoyed by 120 people.

James Dowd, Allegany County Pomona Master, was Emcee for the evening. Sherri Taft, New York State Grange Lady Assistant Steward, and Christian Taft, New York State Grange Assistant Steward were our guest speakers. Other honored guests were Matthew Horton, New York State Grange Steward, and Sandra Green, New York State Grange Pomona.

We had Grange members from Allegany County and Steuben County in attendance. There were 34 Grange members including Sherri, Christian and Tessa Taft and John Horner.

After dinner we had a program at which Sherri and Christian Taft spoke on the Grange and what they are involved in with the Grange. Matt Horton and Sandra Green were also asked to say a few words.

After the program a square dance was held. Music was by the Starlight Ramblers. We also gave out door prizes that were donated by businesses in Allegany County. We had donations from 50 businesses and individuals. All who attended the banquet received door prizes.

We appreciate the generous donations from these businesses and individuals. A very good time was had by all who attended.
These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot disappear from the hallowed patriot's country, but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and wom- an." These words by Thomas Paine in December 1776 spoke to a deepening crisis in America, the Revolutionary War. Another crisis with a different face and unseen enemy now grips the soul of our nation. But as in 1776, the patriot spirit in America is alive and well. COVID-19 has become a common enemy that is bringing us to- gether as we tackle serious new medical, economic and societal challenges. As the infection rate from the virus rises exponentially and the death rate climbs, the medical community is trying everything in its arsenal to miti- gate this disease and some interventions seem to be working. The President, governors and mayors have taken drastic but necessary lockdown steps to limit crowds and movement to slow disease transmission. Stocks tumbled and unemployment skyrocketed as a result. Congress and states caused by panic buying and restaurant closures. There is plenty of food available, but the challenge is to keep plants staffed and running with large numbers of workers (while simultaneously preventing COVID-19 infections). Food distribution systems are already stressed after a stormy supply moving forward. The Administration has suspended hours-of-service rules to enable critical industries truckers to shorten delivery times. The National Grange and a large number of agriculture, fresh The National Grange and the patient advocacy community are pledging to keep patients longer to combat the coronavirus. The emer-The National Grange and a group of business organizations petitioned the leadership of the Senate and House Homeland Security and Govern- ment Affairs Committees to include funding in the coronavirus relief package as necessary to keep the USPS fully functional during this crisis and beyond. Philanthropy and government and diagnostic partners to in- crease testing capacity, keeping plants open to maintain a steady supply of medicines for patients. Cooperating with governments and insurers to ensure that, when new treatments and vaccines are approved, they will be available and affordable for patients. We're aware of some closed rural school districts who are busing meals instead of students. The cafeteria workers show up at 6:00 am, prepare the usual number of free meals for the day, load the meals on buses, then make normal bus routes to drop off meals instead of picking up kids. The food system's can be hard to quantify to describe the toll that COVID-19 has taken on farmers. The stock market crash wiped out three years of gains. As events, attractions, festivals, parades, meetings, conventions and other gatherings are canceled and schools, universities and businesses close, workers, suppliers, small businesses and the economy at large lose crucial consumer spending. A 2.2 trillion economic rescue package, the largest in U.S. history, is on the way to Americans. However, it will take some time for the benefits to trickle down to those most in need. There's funding for hospitals, med- ical personnel and scarce medical supplies; financial aid for individuals and families, small business, industries, child care, and seniors assistance; emergency education; emergency transit needs; buffer capital for Treasury Department loans; defer payments on federal student loan payments until Sep- tober 30; emergency feeding programs and local food systems; $14 bil- lon to replenish USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation fund, and $9.5 billion for food aid for specialty crops (vegetables, fruits, nuts, etc.), which have not traditionally been included in USDA aid. The National Grange is an independent and small business interests on a letter to President Trump, House Speaker Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader McConnell urging them to take immediate action to minimize the number of businesses closed and workers unemployed. The group suggested Washington’s response include, but not be limited to: Readily accessible, unsecured credit for employers of all sizes to pay work- ers, rent and other operating costs during this crisis. The National Grange has opened its hearts, its hands, its sense of service to the needs of people across the country. We've all been touched by the generosity of everyday Americans. We're working hard to ensure their needs are met. The National Grange has joined the effort to feed rural students. We are providing new meals to rural students, and over 1,350 rural Critical Access Hospitals better funding, higher Medicare reimbursement rates, expanded bed space and the ability to keep patients longer to combat the coronavirus. The emer- geney declaration waives existing rules that had restricted rural hospitals and opens up access to $50 billion in funds to provide health care professionals more flexibility to fight COVID-19. The 126 rural hospitals that have closed since 2010 were negatively impacted by the whittling away of Medicare reimbursement and choices of the ACA to expand Medicaid. Biopharmaceutical Industry Responds The companies are coming together to share new technolo- gy, research and government spending to support the battle against COVID-19. Screening global libraries of medicines to identify potential treat- ments Initiating clinical trials to test new and existing therapies Sharing results in real time with governments and other companies Dedicating top scientists and investments in new technologies to speed the development of effective vaccines Donating supplies and medicines Coordinating with governments and diagnostic partners to in- crease testing capacity, Keeping plants open to maintain a steady supply of medicines for patients Coordinating with governments and insurers to ensure that, when new treatments and vaccines are approved, they will be available and affordable for patients. Fix COVID-19 Access Barriers The National Grange partnered with the patient advocacy community to urge governors, Medicaid directors, insurance commiss- ioners and state boards of pharmacy to protect rural patients and high-risk populations during the COVID-19 crisis. Require insurers to allow a one-time 90-day refill of covered pre- scripts Require insurers to cover off-formulary prescription drugs if a for- mulary drug is not available Ensure prior authorization and reauthorization requirements do not restrict care and treatment Allow home infusion and injection services and appropriate reim- bursement. Extend appeal and fair hearing deadlines for patients seeking access to care and treatment Use flexibilities under section 1135(b)(1)(C) of the Social Security Act. Access to Vaccines The National Grange and the patient advocacy community are urging the House leadership to quickly pass H.R. 5076, the Pro- tecting Seniors Through Immunization Act. The legislation will make structural fixes to the inequities of Medicare Part D, including out-of-pocket payments and access to vaccines, that will provide substantial health and financial benefits to those over the age of 65. Export movement In late March, USDA announced sales of 756,000 metric tons of corn and 340,000 metric tons of hard red winter wheat to China. Also, in late March, USDA announced China's approval of 492 beef plants and 449 pork plants which will now eligible to ship product to China. Canada Approves USMCA Canada's House of Commons and Senate hurriedly passed the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement before going on recess to avoid exposure to coronavirus. All three countries have now ap- proved the trade pact which is considered a boost to American agri- culture. Funding for Export Markets The National Grange and a large number of agriculture, fresh produce, commodity, forest and food organizations are asking Congress to fully fund USDA's Market Access Program and the Foreign Market Development Program (FMDP). The FMDP provides $20. Both programs are contingent upon 100 percent matching contributions from par- ticipating exporters. Amendment the Tax Code to restore the ability for businesses to carry back net operating losses against previous year tax payments, suspend the limit on interest expense deductions for 2020. Allow businesses to fully deduct any losses incurred this year. Keep the Mail Running The National Grange and a group of business organizations petitioned the leadership of the Senate and House Homeland Security and Govern- ment Affairs Committees to include funding in the coronavirus relief package as necessary to keep the USPS fully functional during this crisis and beyond. Rural is not a Virus Barrier The Centers for Disease Control warns farmers, ranchers and rural residents that COVID-19 is not necessarily a barrier against COVID-19, citing the flu epidemic of 1918 that spread to the far reaches of Alaska. Rural residents are urged to follow the same precautions and sanitary measures as more densely populated areas. National Emergency Boosts Rural Hospitals Designation of a national emergency by President Trump gives over 1,350 rural Critical Access Hospitals better funding, higher Medicare reimbursement rates, expanded bed space and the ability to keep patients longer to combat the coronavirus. The emer- gency declaration waives existing rules that had restricted rural hospitals and opens up access to $50 billion in funds to provide health care professionals more flexibility to fight COVID-19. The 126 rural hospitals that have closed since 2010 were negatively impacted by the whittling away of Medicare reimbursement and choices of the ACA to expand Medicaid. POLICY UPDATES AND ISSUE NEWS MARCH 2020 WRAP-UP POLICY UPDATES AND ISSUE NEWS MARCH 2020 WRAP-UP
We also recommend making the employee ITC credit (employment incentive credit) refundable as well. This credit is available to businesses who have made investments and increase the number of employees. Depending on the number of employees added, businesses can earn an additional five percent in tax credits for two years. Making this employer-ITC refundable will provide additional support for employers that are investing in their businesses and adding jobs.

Support Governor Cuomo’s proposal to make the Investment Tax Credit (ITC) refundable

Governor Cuomo has proposed making the current investment tax credit (ITC) refundable for farm businesses. Currently, most farms are permitted to take a four percent credit on most assets purchased. The ITC can be refundable for up to five years for new businesses, however, for other farms, in years where the credits are not used, they can be carried forward to offset future tax liability, but expire after 10 years. Because of the cyclical and capital intensive nature of farming, there are many years where farms are not profitable (and thus have lower tax liability) but still make significant investments. Making the ITC refundable ensures that New York farms receive the benefits they have earned under the ITC before they expire, and encourage continued investment in New York agriculture.

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Below is a chart showing Agriculture funding. There are several areas where the Administration budget falls short. This is typical, year after year. The Grange along with other CAO organizations ask the legislative bodies to add amounts to the budget to provide required funding.

It is becoming much more apparent how essential agriculture is to the economy of New York State and to the nation has become.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM FUNDING</th>
<th>FY 2019-2020 Final Budget</th>
<th>FY 2020-2021 Executive Proposed</th>
<th>CAO 2020-2021 Budget Request</th>
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