

# THE EMPIRE STATE GRANGER



### Our Vision!

- Initiator of Community Action
- Facilitator of Leadership Development
- Advocate for Families
- Trusted Conveyor of Issues to Legislators



March April 2023

## President's Column

Stephen C. Coye



The spring of the year always brings with it new beginnings. Plant life emerges from winter dormancy, animals return both from warmer climates or hibernation, more varieties of birds fill the skies, and yes, insects reappear as well. As much as some of us don't care for the cold temperatures, at least we can be glad for several months of no bugs. With the renewals in Nature, we also sense a renewal in our thoughts and outlooks. The energy and desire to get things accomplished returns to get going with projects that this time of year brings with it, as well as ideas for improvements developed over the winter months.

Historically, the spring of the year has been a time of renewed activity in the Grange. Back in the days of the "annual membership campaign" most were conducted at this time of year. Better weather brought more activities to the Grange Halls, and programs and projects were swung into action. As many State Legislatures, as well as Congress, are in full swing at this time of year interest around legislative activities increased as well. It is interesting to note that while the National Grange was officially organized in the winter, (December 4, 1867) and subsequently the "trial" Grange (Potomac) was instituted in January of 1868, it wasn't until the spring, April 3,

1868 to be exact, that O.H. Kelley set out for home in Minnesota with the goal of organizing Granges along the way, with his first success being Fredonia Grange #1 a few weeks later.

Springtime is still a very important time in Grange life. While some of the old practices, such as the annual membership campaign, are no longer practical due to societal changes, there are many other things to get involved with, and attract the attention of the potential member. April is Grange Month, which is an excellent opportunity to have an open house. It can be a complicated or simple as you want it, a formal program, or just a coffee/donuts "drop in and hang out" fellowship time. Whatever works best in your community is what should be done.

This spring, perhaps more important this year than in the recent past years, is a good time to focus on membership, not in the sense of only at this time of year, but as the start of a continual emphasis throughout the year. As you may have read, nationally the Grange had a net gain in membership last year for the first time in almost seven decades. We didn't quite have one here in New York, but it was close. This would not happen were it not for a renewed interest in community, and its organizations. Three Granges have been revitalized here in New York since the end of the Pandemic, and a date has been set for another one. Pre-pandemic, I'm not sure these efforts would have succeeded. So the bottom line is, people are interested, and it thus becomes our duty to demonstrate to them the capabilities of our organization and ask for their participation. It is interesting that when word gets around that a Grange may close, all at once a cry goes up from the community that this can't be allowed to happen, new members come into the fold, and the organization thrives once again. We need to take advantage of this renewed interest while it lasts, and Grange Month provides the opportunity to make it happen. I would encourage you to check out the National Grange website for all kinds of Grange Month information, including sample press releases, sample proclamations, posters and banners, all yours with the click of the mouse. Start planning now, as complete plans yield greater success. Take pictures at your event for your website/Facebook page, or the Empire State Granger. Best wishes for a successful event.

## Ausable Valley Grange

Pictured are a number of the newly revitalized Ausable Valley Grange 973 members. They are enthusiastic to make their facility a hub of activity in Keesville.



## Education Aid

The following are Financial Aid opportunities for members of the Grange:

- DeNise Agriculture Scholarship is available to Grange, FFA and 4-H members who are pursuing a career in an agriculture related field
- The June Gill Nursing Scholarship - trust established by a Grange member for Grangers pursuing a career in nursing
- The Caroline Kark Award—trust fund established by Grange for Grangers interested in a career in working with deaf or hearing impaired people
- Susan Freestone Award—established for Junior Grangers seeking higher education in New York State
- Grange Student Loan Fund—established for Grange members as college financial aid. Low interest loans to be repaid after graduation.
- Cornell Grange Scholarship is granted through Cornell University based on determined financial need. This scholarship was started with a grant from the New York State Grange, and is for students accepted into the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, preferably for students who are members of the Grange, or whose family members are or have been Grange members. Forward letter of request to New York State Grange Office by June 1st (see page 4 for address)  
Applications for all awards are available from the New York State Grange Headquarters.

**Application Deadline is April 15**

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# Legislative State Grange Secretary Column

Cindy Benson-Pollard



Spring is time of renewal. Flowers are blooming, trees are sprouting their leaves and grass is getting green. Now is a good time to renew your Grange activities. The slow days of winter are ending and now is the time to be active again.

It is also the time that our state and federal government really start in earnest. The big issue that we will face this year in Congress is that of the new Farm Bill. Hearings are already underway. I encourage you to let your Representatives know the Grange's position on issues that will be addressed during the negotiation process.

On a state level, I have been very busy already this year. The Governor has presented her budget. She has included many issues that are of a concern to our rural areas especially for the agricultural sector of our economy. We will be watching how the negotiations progress. The initial presentation is always more of a wish list by the Governor. We will monitor ongoing negotiations and encourage our state legislators to negotiate in good faith and to deliver an on-time budget.

I ask you to be watching for our email blasts. If you are not on our list, I ask you to contact State Grange headquarters and share your email address with us. This is our way of involving all of our members in the legislative work of the Grange. It is also a good way to let our legislators and Governor know that the Grange is active and involved. How are you doing with your resolution writing? I have received a few this year for this year's State Grange session. Please remember to keep them short and sweet and that all background information be attached with the resolution.

If you have any questions are need any help with your legislative work, please contact me. I am always glad to help. Think spring!!



Ryan Orton

To follow up from my last article, a net gain is literally right in front of us staring us in the face! When I completed my 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Report to National Grange, New York was now short of a net gain by only 10 members! We're closer than ever to that magic "+" in front of our membership numbers! However, I think we did achieve a net gain in the last Quarter of 2022. Some Granges have not sent in their December Quarterly Report, and I know there should be some new members reported on them. But, since we did not receive their reports in time for me to report to National Grange, we can't count them. However, the good news is that it will be counted on the March 2023 Quarterly Report to National Grange if these Granges send in their Quarterly Reports! Moral of the story here: Send in your Quarterly Reports on time so we have an accurate membership number for the Empire State!

Modernization is coming to this Office! Thanks to the help and expertise of Ed Lawton, Treasurer of Oxford Grange #894 (Chenango County), a new Electronic Quarterly Report (as a fillable PDF) has been developed! This was done following the passage of a resolution presented by Chenango County at State Session last October asking for this very option. And that's the key word: OPTION. Each Grange in New York State will have the option to use this new Electronic Quarterly Report or the traditional paper copies. Secretaries will not be forced to use one or the other; you have the choice! Dues payments would still have to be mailed to me as we don't have the means for electronic payments...yet (more on that in a future article!). The new Electronic Quarterly Report is being tested by 5 Community Granges for March 2023. If everything goes smoothly, we will make it an option for every Community Grange in New York for June. Before sending it out for it's test run, I played with the new Electronic Quarterly Report. It's very easy to use, and the best feature is that it does the math for you! This makes me very happy! As you know by now, I teach History, not Math!

Congratulations to the following Granges for welcoming new members since the last writing:

- 3 New Members**  
Copake Grange #935 (Columbia County)  
Walton Grange #1454 (Delaware County)
- 2 New Members**  
Eureka Grange #46 (Wayne County)
- 1 New Member**  
Corfu Grange #142 (Genesee County)

## Family Activities

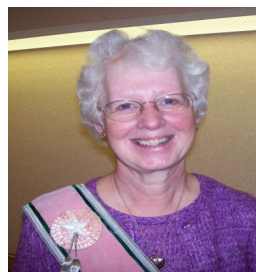
Brenda Noble



Hi everyone! We will soon be having the Lecturers/Family Activities Conference on Saturday April 29. We welcome all Grangers and friends for a day of fellowship to see all of the art work and handiwork. There will be a speaker and Talent contest. We will also go over our programs for the departments and any questions. Cortland County will be making and serving the lunch. Please call Grange Headquarters to let us know how many will be coming.

There is also a new contest for the Northeast Exposition - a decorated tea cup. You can use a cup with its own design or paint it yourself then decorate it however you wish. We will be picking one to go to the Northeast Exposition with our State Contest in April. We will also be judging Quilted wall hanging, Baby quilt, and Plastic canvas. I will also take items for the store at the Northeast Exposition. These items are sold to support judging for the contests and for the maintenance of the building. I need the items sent to me by August 20, 2023. Thank you all for your help!

## Chaplain's Corner



Virginia L. Corner

### GPS = GOD'S PERSONAL SERVICE

Have you ever had your GPS (Global Positioning System) give you directions to a wrong location? You find yourself in a hayfield or cornfield and it's definitely not the friend's house you were looking for! That's when we lose our trust in the device that we depend on to reach the desired destination.

Loss of trust is a big issue. Even Jesus couldn't trust His disciples to be on guard for one

hour. In Matthew 26:36-40, Jesus asked them to keep watch but when He returned, He found them sleeping!

May I suggest that we change our GPS to stand for "God's Personal Service". Whenever I have asked Him for directions, advice, guidance etc., He has never failed me. As Matthew 7:7 says, "ask and it will be given to you" and again in Luke 11:9.

Check out these verses to help you understand God's desire to have us ask Him: John 15:7; Acts 5:32 and I Corinthians 4:1 & 2.

We send sympathy to the family of Bev Marvin, Monroe Co.



## State Lecturer



Jolene Pirrone

There's good news and bad news. Bad news first. There will be no regional conferences. There was a last minute bid as of the previous ESG, but that is no more.

The good news is there is still the FAC/Lecturer's event here in NY on Saturday, April 29th to look forward to. I have plugged the details many times so you know what to do. I've seen lots of good work happening on Facebook so I'm excited to see it all in person.

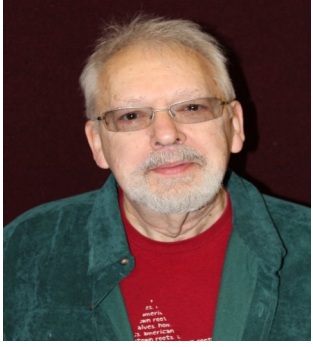
As long as entries get to headquarters before the event, you're good to go. I do need to know who is singing beforehand. If you were not able to have judging at Subordinate or Pomona level, that's OK as well again for this year.

Look for details in the mail soon. After the state conference, I will be producing the new handbook, so please send me ideas if you have any. [jolene@advancedwebdesign.com](mailto:jolene@advancedwebdesign.com)





## Leadership Membership



Barton Snedaker

As I was researching a presentation for another organization I found that the Latin root word for community and common is *communio* which means to share. What a concept for these columns.

Many, if not all of you readers, are aware that local Granges used to be referred to as Subordinate Granges. That word has been slowly phased out and the use of Community Grange is becoming more prevalent. Subordinate seems to say that we are focused on Pomona, State and National Grange. Shouldn't our focus be on our communities instead?

For a while now I have been thinking of the concept of selling your Grange. That wording had never quite fit in my way of thinking about what and how we need to get our message out for new membership development. There just seems to be a hint of desperation in the use of that idiom.

If your Grange is, as I think it should be, a self contained community, then you should be able to take it into the larger community as an organization that will benefit the entire, larger community. One that would be a great fraternity to join. Can you do that without "selling" it? I believe you can. Service and hospitality have long been essential qualities of the Grange. Are they of yours? Community service is (and should be) a hallmark of Granges.

In many of these columns I have written about ways to bring members of your community into the fold, so to speak. Maybe it is time to think of the ways you can include your Grange in the community. One great way is to be a volunteer organization for roadside clean-up. Not only are you being of service to the environment and your community, but you get free advertising of your Grange for any driver to see. Just be sure if you do volunteer that you follow through on a regular schedule. Perhaps you can have a round-table brainstorming session at your next meeting. April is Grange month. What a great time to be thinking about being an active Grange and sharing it as an active part of your community.



## Youth



Johannah Stewart

The youth committee and I are really excited about the prospects of our department moving forward. Since the last edition of the Granger, we had a successful Winter Youth Weekend full of fun, learning, service and good food. Full details of that event are in our youth ambassadors' articles. We also had a zoom game night on February 23rd with fun had by all and the winner earning a gift card. We are looking forward to several events coming up. On April 14-16 we will be in Dutchess County for our Spring weekend. Details are in the works, but the registration forms can be found on our Facebook page and I will be sending them out to Pomona and Subordinate Secretaries as well. Several of our members also plan to attend the state competition weekend at the end of April to compete in Sign a Song and Public Speaking. We might even have a youth entry in the dartball tournament. In addition to State activities, more information will be provided shortly about the North Eastern Youth Conference. As of now, it is planned for July 15th and 16th in Vermont. Participants should plan to come early to practice for the drill competition. We will meet in Albany county starting on the 13th. The winners of the state level competitions in Sign-a-song and Public Speaking should plan to attend to represent our state. As a committee we are focused on planning events with plenty of notice to help as many people as possible be able to attend. If you have questions about any of these events or our other projects, please contact me directly. ~Johannah Stewart Youth Director

### Ambassador Article

When we got to the Winter Youth Weekend at Cuba Grange # 799 we were greeted by Jo and Jon Stewart and we got a game out and started to get to know the people that we would be spending the next few days with. When the rest of the group got there we started planning the layout for the quarter carnival and what we were doing on Saturday. Saturday morning once everyone was awake we got the Grange hall ready for a meeting with guest speakers Jeff Winton from Rural Minds and Teresa McMahon from NY FarmNet. He shared his family's story with suicide and depression. This was the catalyst for starting

the organization Rural Minds to help farmers and their families who are facing mental health problems. Some membership awards were also presented and Jo was officially announced State Youth Director. After the meeting, we got ready for the quarter carnival, an event where kids and their parents were invited to come and enjoy games and food in the Grange hall. It went over very well and everyone had a lot of fun. It was a good experience and a good way to get the community into the Grange hall. After the quarter carnival was over we got cleaned up and ready for some workshops. Garrett Phelps did a workshop on communication and how we use communication in our daily lives. Then I did a workshop on how important communication was in founding the Grange. Finally, Jo shared her plans to revise the youth program and what the next steps are going to be to get more youth.

~ Alyvia Fuchs and Garrett Phelps Youth Ambassadors

## Community Involvement



Melvin Phelps

I wanted to take this opportunity to share and revisit a program with you that is offered by the National Grange in hopes that you will consider nominating individuals for these awards. I would like to strongly suggest that before the nomination is sent to me that you recognize these individuals on a local level as well. I can remember when our Pomona Grange Citizen of the Year was my high school agriculture teacher and FFA Advisor, Bruce Hazen. It was a great feeling as a student to be able to honor him in this way, and he was so appreciative of the gesture.

Consider nominating a person and forward the completed application to me with your report in September. I have copied the description of the Firefighter and Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award. Both applications can be found on the National Grange Website and the NYS Grange Website.

Many states have continued a project that Dick Patten, New Hampshire State Grange Community Service Director, started when he was the National Community Service Director in 1998. He initiated a recognition award for firefighters and law

enforcement officers that local Granges could utilize. These two awards will be known as the Dick Patten Community Service Firefighter and Law Enforcement Officer of the Year presented by the National Grange Community Service Department. These awards are open to volunteer and paid firefighters and law enforcement personnel.

This year, the National Grange is added a National Grange Teacher of the Year award.

## State Grange Historian

Carol Bailey



DID YOU KNOW...

That the second annual conference for lecturers was held at Cornell in 1928? As noted in the lecturer's report in the Journal of Proceedings, 197 lecturers were present for the week. Miss Jennie Buell of Michigan State Grange and Professor Robert Bruce Tom of Ohio State University were both instructors. A group from the Colleges of Agriculture and Home Economics at Cornell also gave instruction. Our annual Lecturers and Family Activities Day will be April 29 at headquarters beginning at 10 a.m.

In this same journal in the Master's report GLF is told about. Formed in 1920 it is now operating feed mills in Buffalo and Peoria, IL. Buffalo was still a major site of mills into the 1960s. My husband made at least one and sometimes two trips hauling feed from Buffalo in the mid 60s. Now the waterfront is totally different with tourist attractions. GLF also had an active seed service during that time. Its warehouse in Syracuse could supply 40,000 farms with seeds. In 1928 there were over 600 communities served by GLF which eventually became Agway, now almost defunct.

A list of county deputies was compiled the Grange historian, L. L. Allan.

During Farm and Home Week at Cornell in 1928 Dean Vivian of Ohio State University presented an illustrated lecture on the ritual of Grange. The lecture showed the beauty and sacredness of our ritual.

According to Mrs. Post who gave the Home Economics Committee report Ovid Grange Hall, Seneca County, was the oldest in the nation. A sign was made with this designation. This hall was checked out

(Continued on page 4)



(Continued from page 3) Historian

by the museum committee as a possible site for our Grange Museum.

Skaneateles Juvenile Grange won second in the nation for a program entirely given by the juveniles. Their prize, a gavel.

In the 1930 journal it is noted that the past year was a difficult one for agriculture with drought, finance, mechanization and population shifts; all playing a role.

Some resolutions the Grange favored in 1930 were for a farmer to have a seat on the Board of Regents, a State Fair building for boys and girls, and enlargement of the Saratoga Battlefield Park.

At the Lake Placid session in 1934 it was voted to move the annual session to December. They were tired of the snow and cold of February. From the 1973 history it looks like the session was then moved to October in

1939. This allowed resolutions of national interest to go to National Grange for action in a timely manner. 1940 saw resolutions printed for the first time.

During the years of World War II Granges saw the same disruptions as many people in general did. Some Granges were compelled to move as the government was taking large tracts of land for its uses. Officers and members were drafted with new elections forced to take place. With gas rationing some meetings were curtailed. Dinners suffered from rationing of sugar and coffee especially. Blackouts also had their effect also. Then came Hiroshima and Nagasaki. A new threat for the world to contend with.

Despite the wartime conditions the Pomona Masters Association was organized on December 13, 1944. There was a question of whether the annual session of October 1945 because of the ban on transportation. However the ban was lifted in time for the event.

During Henry Sherwood's term 75 farm editors representing 16,000,000 subscribers met in Pawling Grange for a conference. Gov. Thomas Dewey called the meeting which included a tour of the Dewey farm, conference and luncheon. National and State Grange representatives, editors of regional papers and a senator and a congressman were present.

Check the website or contact me for ideas to work with other departments in a historical context.



# Sports

Director Bruce Dehner

Well I would like to get more interest in our sports so if anyone has any idea please get them to me. We will be holding or dart ball tournament April 30<sup>th</sup> so get your teams in to me asap. Bowling is coming up in June 4<sup>th</sup> would like to have more teams so counties please see if you can get more interest. Golf will be July 9<sup>th</sup> hopefully in Shortsville again this year. August 5<sup>th</sup> will be corn hole we will need a sign up so if you have a team get it too me. Again if anyone needs anything about sports please get in touch with me and I look forward too seeing you all soon.



NYS Grange Sesquicentennial  
A Treasured Tradition With The  
Future in Focus

As part of the Sesquicentennial of the New York State Grange we will be compiling a photo album of the 150<sup>th</sup> Regional Celebrations as well as other Sesquicentennial events. Especially it is our hope that every Grange will have a photo of their hall or Grange activity in this album. To make this a reality we are asking that someone from each Grange represented at one of the Regional Celebrations bring a photograph with accompanying caption of their Grange Hall, Grange event/activity, or both. No Grange should be left out. Make sure your Grange is represented in the 150<sup>th</sup> State Grange Photo Album.

The intention of the Sesquicentennial Committee has been to reach out to as many parts of the state as possible so that more members can join in celebrating this landmark 150<sup>th</sup> birthday of the New York State Grange. These celebrations will be a time for getting acquainted with members from other counties, sharing ideas, having some fun activities, and remembering those who have built up our organization. Each Celebration will be different but all will include ice cream and birthday cake. Counties are listed for each Celebration just as a guideline for attendance. Every member is encouraged and invited to attend any or all of the 150<sup>th</sup> Regional Celebrations. Following are the May and June Celebrations. Remember to bring photographs for the 150<sup>th</sup> NYS Grange Photo Album.

**Saturday May 13, 2023, at Freedom Plains Grange #857** in Dutchess County starting at 2pm. Host Ryan Orton- phone 845-868-7869. Counties - Columbia, Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Sullivan, Ulster, and Westchester.

**Sunday May 21, 2023, at**

**the State Grange Headquarters,** 100 Grange Place, Cortland starting at 1pm. Hosting are Barbara Lavier-phone 315-662-7758 and Roberta Severson – phone 315-673-9927. Counties - **Chemung,** Cortland, Herkimer, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga, **Tioga,** Tompkins, and **Schuyler.**

**Sunday June 4, 2023, at Kirkland Grange #684,** 43658 County Route 11, Redwood, NY 13679 in Jefferson County. Host Melvin Phelps- phone 315-778-6712. Counties - Franklin, Jefferson, Lewis, Oswego, and St. Lawrence.

**Saturday June 17, 2023 at Curriers Grange #1273,** 983 Chaffee Road, Arcade, NY 14009 in Wyoming County. Hosts are Laura Magrum – phone 585-813-8238 – and Tom Hebiesen – phone 716-680-2211. Counties - Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, **Steuben,** and Wyoming

It is still possible to order candles recognizing Granges and Grangers for the traveling fundraising 150<sup>th</sup> Birthday Cake. Forms for ordering candles can be downloaded from the New York State Grange web site at <https://nysgrange.org> under Events/ NYS Grange Sesquicentennial. Also, you can call Roberta Halbert at 607-783-2445 and she will send an order form.

Upcoming 150<sup>th</sup> Regional Celebrations will be **Saturday July 22, 2023** at Brunswick Grange #1337 (Rensselaer County) Hosts: Alice Grimsley (phone 518-279-9113) and Sue Drake (phone 607-264-3069) –Counties – Albany, Essex, Fulton, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schoenectady, Schoharie, Washington; **Saturday July 29, 2023** at Wide Awake Grange #747 (Ontario County) starting at noon with a potluck lunch. Hosts: Sharon Croucher (phone 315-573-3097) and Roberta Severson (phone 315-673-9927) - Counties – Cayuga, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Seneca, Wayne, Yates; **Saturday August 26, 2023** at Butternut Valley Grange # 1533 (Otsego County) located at 7 Bloom St., Gilbertsville Hosts: Roberta Halbert (phone 607-783-2445) and Sue Drake (phone 607-264-3069) - Counties - Broome, Chenango, Delaware, Otsego

Please make plans to bring your candidates for membership and those members who have not seen the Grange Degrees to the **Degree Day on Saturday September 30** at the State Grange Headquarters in Cortland. The First through the Fifth Degrees will be conferred. Members will then be ready for the Sixth Degree at the State Grange Session in Auburn at the Holiday Inn on Saturday October 14 in the evening and the Seventh Degree at the National Grange Convention in Niagara Falls in November. All the Degrees are inspiring and reflect those strong foundational principles upon which the Grange organization was built.

Sesquicentennial Co-chairs  
Roberta Halbert 607-783-2445,  
Susan Drake 607-264-3069

**Potential of AI and Machine Learning in Agriculture By Betsy E. Huber, National Grange President**

As the world's population continues to grow, so does the need for sustainable and efficient ag-

riculture practices. In recent years, advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning have shown potential to revolutionize the way we approach agriculture, making it more precise, productive, and sustainable AI and machine learning can be applied in a variety of ways across the agriculture industry. For example, sensors and drones equipped with machine learning algorithms can be used to collect and analyze data on soil moisture, nutrient levels, and crop growth patterns, allowing farmers to optimize their planting and irrigation schedules. This can help farmers conserve resources, reduce waste, and increase yields. In addition, machine learning algorithms can be used to detect and diagnose plant diseases, pests, and other issues that can impact crop health. By analyzing data on plant physiology and environmental conditions, these algorithms can help farmers identify problems early and take appropriate action to prevent or mitigate damage. AI and machine learning can also be used in livestock management, where sensors and tracking devices can collect data on animal health, behavior, and performance. This information can be used to optimize feed and water delivery, identify potential health issues, and improve breeding practices. Despite the potential benefits of AI and machine learning in agriculture, there are also challenges and concerns that must be addressed. For example, there are questions around data privacy and ownership, as well as the potential for job displacement as automation technologies become more widespread. It will be important for stakeholders across the industry to work together to address these challenges and ensure that the benefits of AI and machine learning are accessible to all. In conclusion, the potential of AI and machine learning to transform agriculture is significant. By leveraging these technologies, farmers and other agriculture professionals can make data driven decisions that help them conserve resources, increase yields, and improve sustainability. As these technologies continue to evolve, we can look forward to a future of smarter, more efficient agriculture. This article was written by a computer! You may have recently seen articles about ChatGPT and Artificial Intelligence (AI) machine learning. With just a brief prompt, the ChatGPT itself wrote this article, pulling information from all sources on the internet to put together an article that is informational and makes sense. Is this our future?







## POLICY UPDATES and ISSUE NEWS FEBRUARY 2023 WRAP-UP

### WASHINGTON OVERVIEW

#### Congress Gets to a Slow Start

Following a lengthy process to elect a Speaker for the new 218<sup>th</sup> Congress, the first few weeks of the new session have gotten off to a slow start. In the House, it took until early February for both parties to finalize their committee assignments, and subcommittee assignments have only just been determined. As well, many committees have only recently been able to hold their first hearings to organize the committee and begin working on legislative issues. In the Senate, committees were able to form earlier due to continued Democratic control of the chamber. As a result of this disparity in organizational quickness, Senate committees are further along in beginning their legislative work than committees in the House. For example, the Senate Agriculture committee has already hosted several hearings on the Farm Bill, while the House has only had one listening session so far.

#### Debt Limit is Top Issue

While work has begun to progress on a variety of legislative issues, the looming threat of a debt limit default is top of mind in Congress and the White House. The debt limit is a cap set by Congress on the amount of money which the federal government is authorized to borrow in order to meet ongoing fiscal obligations. It is important to note that the debt limit does not control future or new spending by the federal government, it only controls borrowing to meet existing spending authorized by Congress. Congress has never failed to raise the debt limit when necessary, and has done so 78 separate times since 1960 under Congresses and Presidencies of both parties. Should the Congress fail to raise the debt limit before the cap is hit, which is estimated to come sometime in the summer this year, then the federal government would default on its fiscal obligations, certainly causing serious economic turmoil.

House Republicans have made clear that they will not vote to raise the debt limit if Democrats in the Senate and White House don't agree to certain terms. The House Republican demands vary significantly depending on which member of Congress is asked, but all generally center around some amount of spending cuts or an agreement to not spend over a certain amount of money in the future.

Some of these proposed cuts have caused turmoil within the House Republican Conference, such as proposed changes to nutrition assistance programs which House Agriculture Committee Chair GT Thompson (R-PA) has argued should not be considered in debt limit negotiations. Currently, Democrats have demanded that Republicans outline a specific set of demands before they are willing to begin negotiations surrounding a deal to pass a debt limit increase. Many Democrats have also argued that the debt limit should be raised without any conditions, pointing to recent debt limit increases which occurred under President Trump without any conditions as precedents. For the time being, neither side looks likely to budge in its position, but a compromise must be found in order to avoid serious economic consequences.

### AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

#### Expanding Agricultural Exports Act

Agricultural export market development and promotion programs have added an average of \$9.6 billion annually since 1977 to the value of U.S. farm exports. But these programs have not kept pace with foreign competition placing the U.S. at a competitive disadvantage. The bipartisan and bicameral Expanding Agricultural Exports Act would double the annual mandatory funding for foreign market promotion and development. Sponsors of the EAEA Act are Senators King (I-ME), Ernst (R-IA), Smith (D-MN), Grassley (R-IA), and Collins (R-ME), and Representatives Newhouse (R-WA-04), Costa (D-CA-21), Mann (R-KS-01), Panetta (D-CA-19), Hinson (R-IA-02), Schrier (D-WA-08), Finstad (R-MN-01), and Pingree (D-ME-01).

#### Cattle Pricing Reintroduced in 118<sup>th</sup> Congress

The bipartisan Cattle Price Discovery and Transparency Act has

been reintroduced in the Senate by Fisher (R-NB), Tester (D-MT), Grassley (R-IA), and Wyden (D-OR) as original sponsors. The bill establishes minimum levels of fed cattle purchases made through pricing mechanisms such as negotiated cash, negotiated grid, stockyards, and other accepted trading systems. It also establishes a public library of marketing contracts, mandates boxed beef reporting, and requires packers to report the numbers of cattle to be delivered for the next 14 days. The intent is to create total transparency in cattle markets. Joining as cosponsors of the Act are Senators Ernst (R-IA), Braun (R-IN), Smith (D-MN), Smith (R-MS), Daines (R-MT), Cassidy (R-LA), Lujan (D-NM), Durbin (D-IL), Heinrich (D-NM), Warnock (D-GA), Blumenthal (D-CT), Gillibrand (D-NY), Lumis (R-WY), Hawley (R-MO), Brown (R-OH), Rounds (R-SD), Kennedy (R-LA), and Ricketts (R-NB). National Grange member policy supports the provisions of this legislation.

#### House Creates Special China Committee

House Speaker McCarthy has convened a special bipartisan panel to investigate Chinese investments in U.S. agriculture. Its charge is to create a report by the end of the year to highlight issues that need legislative solutions. A 2022 report by the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission warned that China could gain further leverage over U.S. supply chains by purchasing agribusiness and land here.

#### End of Pandemic-Era SNAP Benefits

Emergency pandemic-era Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) special benefits ended this month. Work requirements to be eligible for normal SNAP benefits that had been paused during the pandemic are back. General work requirements are applicable to recipients ages 16-59 who must register for work in order to get benefits. There are exemptions for taking care of children or incapacitated persons as well as for physical or mental reasons. Able bodied adults without dependents (ABAWD) ages 18-49 must work 20 hours per week.

#### New Requirements for Healthy Food Label

The Food and Drug Administration is updating its requirements for the use of the term healthy on food labels for the first time since 1994. If food companies want to use the healthy claim, the product must abide by specific thresholds of total and saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium plus contain nutrients like Vitamin A, calcium or iron.

### Conservation and Environment

#### Climate-Smart Funds Available to Producers

The USDA is releasing funding for agricultural producers and forest owners to participate in voluntary conservation programs and adopt climate-smart practices. The money, made available through the Inflation Reduction Act, will be allocated to programs administered by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. These include the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Agriculture Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), and Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). NRCS accepts applications for its programs year-round. Funding is through a competitive process and will include an opportunity to address unmet demand from producers who have previously sought funding for climate-smart conservation programs.

### Health Care

#### National Grange Survey Highlights Rural Cancer Disparities

Cancer is the second most common cause of death in the United States after heart disease. A new study by the National Grange with data analytics firm Xcenda finds that compared to urban areas, rural communities have overall higher rates of cancer incidence, late-stage diagnoses, and mortality than their urban counterparts. Unfortunately, the urban-rural disparity in cancer mortality has been widening over the past decade. The study reveals that people in rural areas are less likely to get preventive health screenings than those who live in cities and suburbs. Some of the reasons are a lower percentage of workers with jobs that offer health insurance, higher poverty rates, or the simple barrier of a lengthy drive to reach a health center that offers cancer screenings such as mammograms and colonoscopies. The Grange will use this data to urge rural citizen access to and Medicare coverage for new technologies such as multi-cancer early detection tests which can simultaneously screen for dozens of cancers with a simple blood draw.

#### Congress to Look at Middlemen and Drug Pricing

Insurance companies use middlemen known as Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs) to decide what medicines people can get and how much people must pay for these medicines. These middlemen operate with little transparency and accountability. The top three PBMs, CVS Caremark, OptumRx, and Express Scripts control 80% of the entire prescription drug market. PBMs often bill health plans, employers and government health programs more than what they pay to the pharmacy for medicines and pocket the difference. PBMs may also require patients to pick up prescriptions at pharmacies the PBM owns or has another financial relationship with. Congress will try to add transparency and accountability to the PBM process. Senators Grassley (R-IA) and Cantwell (D-WA) have introduced S. 127, the

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Pharmacy Benefit Manager Transparency Act of 2023 and the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee has scheduled a hearing on the bill. The House has launched a bipartisan Patient Access Caucus to focus on patient access to health care and PBM involvement. The Grange has urged oversight of PBMs as one way to cheapen the price of prescription drugs.

#### Telecommunications

#### More Time Needed to Challenge Broadband Maps

The National Grange has asked the National Telecommunications and Information Agency (NTIA) to continue accepting challenges to its draft broadband coverage map released in mid-November. The agency only allowed an eight-week challenge period to receive feedback from residents who were shown to have internet coverage on the map but in fact had no internet. Twenty-House members made similar requests. The NTIA has agreed to continue to receive challenge input on an unofficial basis.

#### OF INTEREST

#### FDA Can't Make Decisions On CBD in Animal Feed

The Food and Drug Administration is calling for a new regulatory pathway to allow the use of cannabidiol, or CBD, in dietary supplements and food additives for animals. The agency had previously concluded that "it is not apparent how CBD products could meet safety standards" for those products. FDA received an application in 2021 seeking approval for use of hempseed meal and cake in poultry feeds. Hulled seeds from industrial hemp, and protein powder and oil from these seeds, are allowed by FDA as ingredients in human foods, however. The agency is concerned that long term CBD use might pose risks to animals, and therefore, people could unknowingly be exposed to CBD through meat, milk and eggs from animals fed CBD.

#### PERSPECTIVE

"The way I see it, if you want a rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain." ~ *Dolly Parton*

"Into each life some rain must fall. Some days must be dark and dreary." ~ *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

"I always like walking in the rain, so no one can see me crying." ~ *Charlie Chaplin*

"Some people walk in the rain; others just get wet." ~ *Roger Miller*

"Rain is grace; rain is the sky descending to the earth; without rain, there would be no life." ~ *John Updike*

### Advocacy Playbook: The Debt Limit

By *Sean O'Neil*, National Grange Legislative Assistant

The new 118<sup>th</sup> Congress has brought with it a return to divided partisan control of the levers of power in Washington, D.C. As a result, many of the must-do legislative actions of this Congress will be more challenging and time-consuming to address. The first must-do action comes in the form of the need to raise the debt limit. The debt limit is a cap set by Congress on the amount of money that the federal government is authorized to borrow to meet ongoing fiscal obligations. It is important to note that the debt limit does not control future or new spending by the federal government; it only controls borrowing to meet existing spending authorized by Congress. Congress has never failed to raise the debt limit when necessary, and has done so 78 separate times since 1960 under Congresses and Presidencies of both parties. Should Congress fail to raise the debt limit before the cap is hit, which is estimated to come sometime in the coming summer, then the federal government would default on its fiscal obligations, certainly causing serious economic turmoil.

House Republicans have made clear that they will not vote to raise the debt limit if Democrats in the Senate and White House don't agree to certain terms. The House Republican demands vary significantly depending on which member of Congress is asked, but all generally center around some amount of future spending cuts or an agreement to not spend over a certain amount of money in the future. Currently, Democrats have demanded that Republicans outline a specific set of demands before they are willing to begin negotiations surrounding a deal to pass a debt limit increase. Many Democrats have also argued that the debt limit should be raised without any conditions, pointing to recent debt limit increases which occurred under President Trump without any conditions as precedents. For the time being, neither side looks likely to budge in its position, but a compromise must be found in order to avoid serious economic consequences.

If you want to get involved in the discussion surrounding the debt limit increase, one useful way you can advocate for yourself and your community is by reaching out to your member of Congress (if you are not sure who that is, use this website: <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>).

Whether you plan to call, send an email, or write a letter to your member of Congress, it is important to make your position clear. As well, try to include a story about how the potential spending cuts or a debt default could affect you, your family, and your community. Each call, email, and letter an office receives is tallied up and considered when your Representative is deciding whether to support or oppose a

bill, and extra weight is given to those contacts which include personal stories.

### Growing Hope Together

By *Pete Pompper*, National Grange Community Service Director

This tagline says so much to me the more I think about it since it was adopted by the partnership between the National Grange and **Rural Minds**. We have been working together for over a year to bring that message to our communities through our Granges. This partnership, along with the Partnership Council on which the National Grange has two seats, has two focus points: one is suicide awareness and prevention, and the other is rural mental health issues and reducing the stigma surrounding them. The more research I do, I am realizing these topics are multifaceted and affect so many different demographics differently.

Because of this, we at the National Grange leadership level are all working on this in different ways. We are all working towards a common goal along with the leadership at Rural Minds. There are weekly - and sometimes daily - phone calls between the National Grange (Burton Eller) and Rural Minds (Jeff Winton and Chuck Strand) when new ideas, topics, or meetings occur. This forward momentum is great to see, and the Grange is at the forefront and helping lead the way in "Growing Hope Together."

We are working on some exciting future plans that will bring several leading groups together to discuss suicide awareness and rural mental health in a forum open to members and non-members alike. As these plans evolve, we will keep you informed and give you the opportunity to be part of it.

I personally applaud the Granges who have already reached out to Rural Minds and other mental health groups in their communities and held public meetings on these topics. From emails and conversations I have had, these programs have been overwhelmingly attended and appreciated in the communities. Cuba Grange #799 (NY) held a Grange Youth weekend recently and invited Jeff Winton (Rural Minds) and Teresa McMahon (NY FarmNet) to speak. They not only had Grange members there, but 20-25 community members attended and interacted with both speakers. Clifton Springs Grange #1042 (NY) and Pioneer Grange #1 (NJ) are both planning meetings on suicide prevention and rural mental health awareness this spring.

I bring these up to say thank you to all of them for realizing the importance of these issues in their communities and taking the lead to put these meetings together. I have had several Grange members call me (609-820-6239) to discuss holding programs like these and how they can do it.

Leaders at the National Grange are working on some suggestions and guidelines to help with this, but I encourage Granges to move forward in your communities. These topics are important to address, and the Granges are leading the way. We are learning from you and everything you are doing. Keep up the good work and feel free to contact [Ann Bercher](#), [Burton Eller](#), or [myself](#) if you have questions or comments to help our communities in "Growing Hope Together".

I encourage you to go to Rural Minds website: [RuralMinds.org](https://RuralMinds.org) for some very useful and pertinent information on these topics.

"Just Ask Me" – the generational need By Samantha Wilkins, Junior Grange & Youth Development Director In today's society, our youth are so consumed with jam-packed schedules and responsibilities that we often put other things on the back burner, and too often that back burner contains the Grange. But why is it that Grange is on that back burner and how do we get the youth and young adults to prioritize Grange in their world? The answer could be as simple as – Just Ask Me. It is all about finding a balance between being persistent while not being too pushy. We (the youth) want to be included - we want to be a part of something and feel like we belong. However, too often we feel as though we are unheard, thought of as being 'just kids,' or not necessarily needed. But now is the time for us to change that conversation and invite the next generation through our doors. As Junior Grange and Youth Development Director, I hear Grangers over and over again ask about how they can get young members through the door; what we need is for you to "ask me," where "me" is the Youth you want to get involved! Sending me a reminder email about the meeting is not going to work. We need you to pick up the phone - call me (or text) - invite me - even send me a reminder text. I may not come the first time, so be persistent. But more important than getting me through the door, make me feel welcome once I get there. Grangers tend to be really welcoming to someone new coming in the door, but sometimes we struggle with keeping that 'we are glad you're here' attitude after the initial welcome. When they get there, the obvious "hello, glad you're here" works, but throughout the time I am at your meeting, invite me to really be a part of things you're doing. If I am brand new, sit by me and explain things as they're happening. After the meeting, invite me back - have me put it on my calendar,

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## Contact Information

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**Stephen C. Coyle, President**  
 100 Grange Place  
 Cortland, NY 13045  
 607-756-7553  
 Steve@nysgrange.org

**Ryan Orton, Secretary**  
 218 Attlebury Hill Road  
 Stanfordville, NY 12581  
 845-868-7869  
 secretary@nysgrange.org

**Jolene Pirrone, Lecturer**  
 PO Box 69  
 East Chatham, NY  
 518-929-1279  
 jolene@advancedwebdesign.com

**Cindy Benson Pollard  
 Legislative Director**  
 401 Charles Avenue, Syracuse, NY  
 13209  
 315-413-9335  
 Cbenson81@msn.com

**Virginia L. Conner, Chaplain**  
 918 Bartnick Road  
 Genoa, NY 13071  
 315-246-7330  
 vlconner48@yahoo.com

**Brenda Noble, Family Activities**  
 7973 Telephone Road  
 LeRoy, NY 14482  
 585-768-6632  
 bnoble195@gmail.com

**Barton Snedaker  
 Leadership Membership**  
 5404 St. Hwy 23  
 Norwich, NY 13815  
 shrngnol@roadrunner.com

**Melvin Phelps  
 Community Involvement**  
 PO Box 493  
 Copenhagen, NY 13626  
 318-778-6712  
 northerngracefarm@gmail.com

**Johannah Stewart  
 Youth**  
 P.O. Box 81  
 Rose, NY 14542  
 (585) 880-6045  
 barringer.johannah@gmail.com

**Bruce Dehner, Sports**  
 PO Box 372  
 DeRuyter, NY 13052  
 315-852-6460  
 bed221@yahoo.com

**Carol Bailey, Historian**  
 3033 Middle Sodus Road  
 Lyons, NY 14489  
 315-946-4379  
 barnlady38@yahoo.com

**Sherri Taft, Jr. Director**  
 164 County Route 14  
 Fulton, NY, 13069  
 kidsbreak@yahoo.com

**Cindy Benson-Pollard  
 NYS Fair  
 Grange Building Superintendent**  
 315-413-9335  
 Cbenson81@msn.com  
 Steve@nysgrange.org

**Sherri Taft  
 Ryan Orton  
 Camp Directors**  
 kidsbreak1@yahoo.com

and then before the next meeting - call me and Ask Me again. This world may keep us really busy, but we are only going to prioritize the things that are truly important to us. If you make me feel important and wanted, I am going to prioritize coming and being part of what you have going on at your Grange Hall. So, Grangers, this is your time - this is your challenge. We are just over a month away from Grange Month so we challenge you during the next few weeks: reach out to some youth in your community and begin the conversation that will help them prioritize their schedules to join you at your Grange meeting in April for Grange month.

Grange Month is just around the corner – April will be here before we know it! Over the next few weeks, keep checking the Grange Month 2023 page on the National Grange website as more things will be added! Stay tuned for information on Grange Spirit Week which will be celebrated April 16-22. We are in year two of our “Raised Right Here,” theme. This year, we encourage our Granges to use the theme to celebrate building strong communities – of all sorts! The network of the Grange community is strong, and we work to make the communities where our Granges function strong, too! During Grange Month, there will be online forums and events with many of the National Grange officers and Directors – please encourage your Grange members to attend! That calendar will be available in mid-March.

The Journal of Proceedings from the 2022 National Grange Convention in Sparks, Nevada is now available. The Journal includes all information from the convention, including minutes, Departmental reports, and the annual audit, as well as the resolutions presented and approved at the convention. In addition, the current policy handbook is included in the JOP, with standing Grange policies and advocacy efforts.

Year B of the Grange Heirloom Program launches in March! The Heirloom Program aims to make Grange ritual and essential documents more accessible to new (and lifelong) members by fostering conversations around the tenets of our Order. If you haven’t participated in Year A, that’s okay! There’s no “wrong time” to jump into the Heirloom Program. We encourage use of these materials on social media, to facilitate discussions in your Grange meetings during “Conferral of the Degrees” or “Good of the Order,” or as jumping-off points for programs in your Grange. These are not meant to be a replacement for Lecturer’s programs, but rather a supplemental resource to help introduce or reinforce the beliefs that make our Order special.

# Bethlehem Grange



“Be Kind”

An interview with Tiffany Ferguson of Waterford, N.Y., a homeschool elementary teacher, as told to Jackie Schrom, Bethlehem Grange #137, Selkirk N.Y.

We turned our nightly ritual into putting smiles on faces. My son, of four years old, and I love to get into our pajamas and snuggle down for reading time. It is one of our favorite activities to do together! Wanting to give others the same opportunity of making memories, that many people at times take for granted, we engaged in our “Be Kind” project.

We decided to collect, from friends and family, like-new and new pajamas and children’s books.

Five weeks later, we had collected forty pairs of pajamas and a plethora of books. We were able to donate to three organizations. Our hope is that it put smiles on many people’s hearts and faces; and perhaps start a reading snug-

gle time tradition for them as well. One organization was the Bethlehem Grange #137 in Selkirk, NY., who, in turn, gave their part to the South End Children’s Café in Albany, NY. “Many children and families will benefit from this donation,” said the director when the pajamas and books were dropped off. Our goal is to continue a “Be Kind” project a few times a year.



New York State Grange



Sesquicentennial  
 1873-2023

# New Grange Members

**Albany Co.**

**Bethlehem#137**

Rachel Betancourt

Nick Fontanet

**Dutchess Co.**

**Rhinebeck #896**

Kymara Lonergan

**Onondaga Co.**

**Taft Settlement#473**

Barbara Burgmeier

**Lamson#588**

Hayley Deville

Maggie McGetrick

Owen McGetrick

**Oswego Co.**

**Sandy Creek #127**

Allison Dillabough

Denise Yendon

**Otsego Co.**

**Pierstown#793**

Barbara Lindholm

Garet Livermore

**Butternut Valley #1533**

T. Sean Herbert

Taryn Herbert

**Putnam Co.**

**Putnam Valley #841**

Paul Bugbee

Robert Li

**Sartaga Co.**

**Corinth #823**

Jeff Collour

Todd Marrow

**St. Lawrence Co.**

**Kendrew #891**

Wayne Beldock

**Wayne Co.**

**Eureka #46**

Aleasha Fuchs

Wyatt Fuchs

**That's the  
 GRANGE way!**



# NY Farm Show



Hello from the New York State Grange Gatekeeper! I had the honor of manning the New York State Grange Booth at the New York Farm Show 2023 from February 23 through 25, 2023 at the New York State Fairgrounds. Many thanks to Bruce Dehner for helping on Saturday, February 25, 2023 and for taking items back to Headquarters. This saved me a trip from home.

Around 300 Special Editions were handed out as well as bottle openers and four large bags of candy. The children really went for the candy.

There was a lot of interest about the Grange. People were very surprised when I told them that they did not have to be involved in agriculture or farming to belong to

Grange. Also, that Grange had activities for the whole family. One gentleman that came to the booth had joined a Grange and was looking for applications as he had five more people that wanted to join. Another gentleman was looking for a Grange near where he lived. When looking up the county he was in we found there was no Grange closer than an hour and a half away from where he lived. He asked how to start a Grange and we gave him New York State President Steve Coye and New York State Grange Secretary Ryan Orton's telephone numbers to contact. There is **A LOT** of positive interest when explaining what Grange is about and what the Grange does.

# Salisbury Center Grange

Pictured are sixteen members of Salisbury Center Grange 624, Herkimer County, and Roger Halbert, Special Deputy. Last August when Roger Halbert and Barton Snedaker, State Membership Director, met with three members of Salisbury Center Grange, they determined the Grange was closed, not having met in four years. Later, one other member responded to a letter sent by Halbert with a different sentiment in "Give us time and let us see what can happen." Thanks to Charles Hayden, who was later elected as Master, the Grange now stands at 24 members...nine who continued their previous membership and 15 who have been obligated into membership by Halbert at three meetings since November. The Grange has a beautiful Grange Hall that needs some work but determined members are already planning and working. Activities include an open house in April, a 50/50 raffle and an additional gift raffle, and a dinner theatre with a meal prepared at the nearby Methodist Church. Two members met with 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders to explain the Grange organization in hopes that some children will choose the Grange to donate some of the required volunteer hours to work with the to get the Hall in readiness. Deputy Halbert complimented them on having 16 of their 24 members out to their recent meeting. The dynamic enthusiasm and team spirit are running wild! See what one determined member can bring about? It can happen in any Grange with faith and determination. Congratulations, Salisbury Center Grange !



# Ravena Grange

On December 18, 2022, Ravena Grange 1457 held its annual Christmas Party at Pegasus Restaurant in West Coxsackie. Membership awards were presented to three faithful members, Pearl Collins (65 years), Evelyn Stone (70 years), and Louis Irving (70 years). Pictured left to right are Kathy Collins-Pierce, accepting the award for her mother, Evelyn Stone, Louis Irving, and Grange President Jo Downey.



# 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.



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