

ESCOP Budget and Legislative Committee (BLC): <http://escop.info/committee/blc/>

Call MINUTES for: 1/26/2021, 4 pm ET (Fourth Tuesday Monthly)

Committee Members:

<p>Chair: Glenda Humiston (WAAESD) Past Chair: Ernie Minton (NCRA)</p> <p>Delegates: Alton Thompson (ARD) Vernon Jones (ARD) Gary Pierzynski (NCRA) Shawn Donkin (NCRA) Puneet Srivistava (NERA) Anton Bekkerman (NERA) Steve Lommel (SAAESD) Saied Mostaghimi (SAAESD) John Talbott (WAAESD) Chris Pritsos (WAAESD)</p> <p>Executive Vice-Chair Jeff Jacobsen (NCRA ED) Chris Hamilton (NCRA AD; Recorder)</p>	<p>Liaisons: Jon Boren (ECOP) Katie Frazier (CARET) Doug Steele (APLU) Eddie Gouge (APLU) Caron Gala (APLU) Jim Richards (CGA) Hunt Shipman (CGA) Vernie Huber (CGA) Maggie Earle (CGA) Kim Whittet (NIFA) Paula Geiger (NIFA) Katherine Fink (NIFA) Glen Hoffsis (BVM) Laura Jolly (BHS)</p>
---	--

Participants: Vernon Jones, Steve Lommel, Saied Mostaghimi, Vernie Huber, Gary Pierzynski, Glenda Humiston, Shawn Donkin, Chris Pritsos, Anton Bekkerman, Laura Jolly, Hunt Shipman, Paula Geiger, Jon Boren, Jim Richards, Kate Fink, John Talbott, Alton Thompson, Gary Thompson, Doug Steele, Bret Hess, Katie Frazier, Rick Rhodes, Caron Gala, Jeff Jacobsen, Chris Hamilton (recorder).

Call Agenda/Notes:

1. Welcome and roll call – Completed, see participants list above.
2. Approval of 11/24 meeting minutes (http://escop.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/BLC_MIN_-20201124.pdf) – Saied made a motion to approve, Gary P. seconded, minutes approved as distributed.
3. Approval of today's agenda
 - Approved as distributed.
 - Jeff and Glenda welcomed Vernon Jones as the new ARD representative to the ESCOP BLC.
4. APLU Update – Doug Steele
 - Doug and Caron are busy working with the new administration's USDA transition team and they thank NIFA for their partnership throughout these efforts.

- APLU is putting together a Zoom series to talk about our priorities and infrastructure advocacy, including working to join the Rebuild Rural Coalition webinar. Doug indicated that the Farm Bureau is very supportive of our push for an ag infrastructure bill.
 - Also working on FY2022 advocacy, including the Unified Ask and higher education challenge grants. There is some speculation that perhaps we could go higher than our current request for a \$66M increase for NIFA. We need to have more conversations on this, so it's good we've started our advocacy discussions early.
 - The CARET/AHS meeting registration should be coming out very soon and APLU is working with a new vendor to better streamline breakout rooms.
5. Infrastructure Update ([Link to advocacy toolbox](#)) – Caron.
- Caron reminded the group that the 1/11 webinar on the infrastructure advocacy effort was recorded, so if you haven't watched it yet, please do so. Please click here to [view the recording](#).
 - Stakeholder engagement meetings are going on right now, both at the national and local/state levels. Now is the time to be engaging with your universities. We need an enthusiastic push on this effort from the LGUs.
 - The team can reach out to additional national stakeholders, so please send ideas to Caron, Alton, Jeff.
 - Q: Have construction/equipment companies been reached out to yet? A: Just superficially, but we plan to look more deeply into this. Associations would probably be better to contact, rather than just individual companies. Jim identified The Association of General Contractors as one possible target group.
6. Cornerstone Report – Hunt
- Secretary Vilsack's confirmation hearing is scheduled for the 2nd week in Feb. Additional senior USDA staff are being named, so please watch the USDA communications press releases for this information at <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases>.
 - They continue to work with APLU on the infrastructure and strategic realignment efforts. For Infrastructure, working to roll out for Rebuild Rural Coalition webinar in February that would roll out report to broad group of stakeholders. Invited to have Tom Coon (PBD chair) to present as well to the Farm Bureau weekly state presidents with Zippy Duvall (national leader).
 - Strategic realignment committee has had robust conversation on an alternative, much simpler advocacy approach. It's closer to the One Ask in terms of overall amount we are advocating for NIFA and as close to an NIH-type model as we can get. The committee has not reached a final outcome yet, but they hope to have something by March to present to appropriations committee. Q: Will there be a chance for this or other ESCOP committees to weigh in? A: Ernie Minton would be an ideal person to have speak to this group or other ESCOP committee. NOTE: ESS reps are Marty Draper and Gary Thompson on this committee.
 - Q: Will there be a return to similar approach to the USDA as Vilsack did in his previous term as Secretary of Ag for Obama? This is hard to predict right now, maybe 60% of things will be familiar, but keep in mind that he will have a new administration to work for, new staff, and overall, a very different climate exists in the US than during the Obama administration.
7. NIFA update – Paula, Katherine

- NIFA is working to get the FY2021 funds in place for quarterly formula fund payments. NIFA also is managing \$140M from three funds (e.g. COVID, Beginning Farmer and Rancher) in the latest COVID supplemental.
 - Carrie Castille was named as the new NIFA director. She has a strong desire to meet with stakeholders, so if your groups haven't yet, please reach out to Kate Fink or Kim Whittet to schedule.
 - Kim Whittet is the in new Acting NIFA Chief of Staff, replacing Bill Hoffman who is now one of the national science liaisons).
 - Parag Chitnis has returned to his old role as Associate Director of Programs/and Acting Director for Operations.
 - The NIFA organizational chart is being updated regularly, so please look there for staffing updates.
8. ECOP report – Jon
- The ECOP BLC is changing its strategy by using the committee to convene expert teams to develop advocacy talking points/concept notes on ECOP priorities (Health, especially as it related to C19; Workforce Development; 4-H/positive youth development; climate, urban agriculture and extension; diversity, equity, and inclusion issues).
 - Collaborating with eXtension to build a web-based advocacy toolkit on these ECOP priorities.
 - Also working to improve their advocacy timing schedule.
9. BHS report – Laura
- Upcoming budget priority discussions are in the works and Laura will report on these at a future BLC meeting.
10. Other business, as needed
- Climate Change was suggested as a moon shot idea: How/should we organize LGUs around this topic?
 - Research EDs have also identified “climate” as something we should be a part of.
 - Rick Rhodes agreed to take the lead on doing a national, high level scan of what's happening across the country in regard to climate change efforts. Keep an eye out for a survey to collect this information.
 - Let's take a deeper dive on these climate discussions and our role during the March call, after CARET.
 - **Future Action: Please send all state climate-related efforts to your regional EDs. NOTE: There will be a survey developed and sent out in the near future.**
 - Vernie also mentioned that the DC-based Food, Ag, and Climate Alliance brings together a broad range of ag interests for climate topics. Rick Rhodes indicated that he will reach out to them for more information.
 - If possible, Climate will be a topic of focus during our March 2021 call.
 - Next BLC call is Tuesday, 2/23/2021 at 4 pm ET.

BLC Horizon Topics

Infrastructure, Capacity Funds Advocacy, BAC/CLP issues, \$380M supplemental (if still around), next annual budget, Moon Shot ideas for research, Biden/Harris Transition Team Priorities, Finance Committee, Government Affairs engagement, etc.

Call adjourned at 4:47 pm ET.