



# Election 2016

Election is important to cattle business, America.

by Katrina Huffstutler

Colin Woodall kicked off his election update session at Cattlemen's College® by saying he needed to manage some expectations right out of the gate.

"When you leave here, you are not going to know who is going to be the next president," the senior vice president of government affairs for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) said. The room filled with laughter, like it did often when the witty lobbyist delivered a line. Yet, Woodall is the first to tell you this election year is serious business — for cattlemen and for America.

While most associate Nov. 8, 2016, with the presidential election, Woodall said that's only one piece of the puzzle. There are some very important House and Senate races, as well. Then there are the hot-button policy issues at the moment — all of which could go in cattlemen's favor or not, depending on who is in Washington.

There's the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which is being negotiated by the United States, Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Vietnam, Canada and Mexico. Then there's the *Waters of the United States*, more commonly known as WOTUS. The *Endangered Species Act* is also important to cattle raisers.

Policies related to production practices and animal health issues continue to be big issues.

"There is always a new attack from the



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animal rights activists," Woodall said. "Who is in the White House and who is in Congress will determine how big these fights are for us."

Yet, many Americans have yet to register to vote. Of those who are registered, many more will not show up to cast their ballot. Woodall's generation, Gen X, is the worst offender of all age groups, but he's trying to change that.

"If you don't vote, you can't complain," Woodall said. "More importantly, it's a

right that's been given to us, and we need to exercise that right."

He adds that some have strayed from voting saying they're too busy. He reminded those folks about absentee and early voting. Others feel like their vote doesn't count anyway. What's the point?

"Every vote counts," he assured the crowd. "That's why we need you."



**Editor's Note:** Katrina Huffstutler is a freelance writer from Electra, Texas.

## Navigating Washington, D.C.

Kristina Butts, senior executive director of governmental affairs for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), spoke to an audience of producers and industry professionals Jan. 27 as part of the 23rd annual Cattlemen's College® at the Cattle Industry Annual Convention & NCBA Trade Show in San Diego, Calif.

Butts leads NCBA's lobbying activities and works closely with the USDA and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to promote communication between agricultural producers, industry leaders and political leaders on Capitol Hill. She serves as the "middle person," helping translate and relate the message of agriculture to traditional staffers who lack a direct connection to the ranching industry.

Butts stressed the importance of D.C. representation by NCBA members and ranchers on the Hill. An increasing number of Congress members and other policy stakeholders come from urban backgrounds and have little or no knowledge of agriculture.

Public engagement, public policy engagement and the sharing of personal stories from agricultural professionals to political professionals are areas Butts said we can always and should always be working to improve. She said farmers and ranchers need to look for ways to make their stories relatable to staffers. She urged the audience to tell their stories.

Butts spoke on subjects like *Waters of the United States* (WOTUS), the Farm Bill, nutrition programs and animal health. She continually stressed the importance of telling your story and working to relate to representatives on the Hill.

— by Shelby Mettlen, assistant editor

**Editor's Note:** This article was written as part of Angus Media's online coverage of the Cattle Industry Convention & NCBA Trade Show. For additional coverage, visit the Newsroom at [www.4cattlemen.com](http://www.4cattlemen.com).