

Calling for COOL

Vocal commentator Tomi Lahren aims to amplify voice to encourage legislative action for country-of-origin labeling.

Story & photo by **Kindra Gordon**, field editor

The slogan “Make America Great Again” helped Donald Trump win the 2016 presidential election, and now conservative commentator Tomi Lahren is using a spin-off of that mantra to try to gain new traction for mandatory country-of-origin labeling (COOL).

Lahren, a former host on the network The Blaze who recently joined Fox News as a contributor on *Hannity* and for digital development, was in Rapid City, S.D., Aug. 26 as the keynote speaker at the Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund, United Stockgrowers of America (R-CALF USA) 18th Annual Convention. Lahren’s presentation was titled “Making the Dinner Table American Again,” and her fiery comments focused on pushing for passage of COOL.

“Labeling on our meat products is a commonsense thing, and American consumers should know. . . . You know where apples and oranges come from, but you don’t know where meat comes from,” she expressed.

She continued, “I challenge you to ask friends and family and on social media, ‘Do you know where your beef is coming from?’ . . . All we need is a sticker on it, and the American consumer can decide.”

Proud to be a voice

Lahren, 25, who grew up in Rapid City, S.D., and has family that ranches in the state, has always sought to have her voice and opinions heard. She attended college in Las Vegas and got her start with One America News in San Diego where she hosted *On Point with Tomi Lahren* — at the age of 21. After a year and a half, Lahren joined The Blaze, a digital network available on TV, radio and the Internet that bills itself as featuring “authentic, unfiltered voices.”

In 2016, Lahren garnered international attention, with *The New York Times* calling her a “rising media star” and BBC News calling her “the young Republican who is bigger than Trump on Facebook.”

She gained the beef industry’s attention in late 2016 and early 2017 with two segments targeting COOL and featuring R-CALF CEO Bill Bullard and COOL advocate Taylor Haynes. She even challenged the National



► “You know where you get your oranges from, you know where you get all of your produce from, but you don’t know where you get your meat from. I take issue with that,” keynote speaker Tomi Lahren told attendees of R-CALF USA’s 18th Annual Convention.

Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA) to debate R-CALF on her show, although it did not come to fruition.

While Lahren’s brazen comments — and accusations of missing facts by COOL opposition — created a firestorm within the beef industry, it was a different storm over abortion comments that led to her suspension from The Blaze in March

2017. Since that time, Lahren has worked independently, continuing to post Facebook videos of herself commenting on hot political topics. The Aug. 30, 2017, announcement of her joining FOX marks a new start to her career.

In spite of that transition, based on her comments to the R-CALF convention,

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agriculture and COOL are topics she does not plan to let slide.

Lahren commented on watching her uncle ranch near Mobridge, S.D.: “It’s a hard lifestyle, but a good lifestyle.” She then told the R-CALF audience, “I talk for a living. I can’t imagine doing what you do, but I will use my platform to speak out for you. . . . I’m here to be your voice.”

She added: “I’m here to talk about what Donald J. Trump campaigned on and that is the forgotten America that includes factory workers, steel workers, coal miners, and farmers and ranchers. The light doesn’t shine on you because you didn’t ask for it. But there is not a better time than now for the American people to start to come together and fight for their industries.”

Lahren expressed that she has spoken with President Trump, and she told the audience, “He cares about you.”

Take action

Lahren closed by encouraging the R-CALF audience to contact their state representatives in Washington, D.C. She displayed a list of the names and phone numbers of individuals in Congress who voted to repeal COOL in December 2015. She said, “I encourage you to take action and put pressure on. Your representatives have a problem, and you need to talk to them — and tell them Tomi Lahren sent you.”

Lahren expressed that she’ll “keep talking until we get COOL.” She encouraged everyone else to “demand American beef”

and use word-of-mouth to spread the message.

Lahren concluded, stating: “You know where you get your oranges from, you know where you get all of your produce from, but you don’t know where you get your meat from. I take issue with that. I think the American consumer deserves to know, and that’s what we’re pushing for. That’s what R-CALF is pushing for. We just want to label the meat as being born and bred in the U.S.A. and give our cattlemen a chance to compete, and give them a chance to make a living for themselves and their families.”



Editor’s Note: *Kindra Gordon is a freelance writer and cattlemaster from Whitewood, S.D.*