

Unity Theme of Convention Opener

Cattle industry leaders address convention's opening session.

by **Troy Smith**

The Opening General Session officially kicked off the 2011 Cattle Industry Convention in Denver, with remarks from the respective leaders of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), the Cattlemen's Beef Promotion and Research Board (CBB) and the American National CattleWomen (ANCW). Their comments, delivered Wednesday afternoon, were tailored to inspire members of their organizations to work together on behalf of the beef industry. Also presented were highlights of a proposed long-range plan for guiding their collaborative efforts.

First, however, Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper welcomed beef producers to the Convention's host state, charging them to reconnect with a U.S. population whose majority has little understanding of how food is produced. The governor called a safe and reliable source of food every bit as important to national security as a consistent supply of oil. He also encouraged industry members to be involved, to make government that more frugal and efficient.



► 2010 NCBA President Steve Foglesong addressed nearly 5,000 cattlemen and women Feb. 2 as he officially kicked off the organization's 2011 convention in Denver. Foglesong advised the attendees to reflect on 2010 successes but focus on possibilities for 2011.

"This is the only country in the world where the people control their government, though it doesn't always seem like it," said Hickenlooper. "We have to reinvent our relationship with government and bring it back to core values."

Alabama beef producer and ANCW President Lana Slaten echoed the governor, saying farmers and ranchers face more and more challenges as the United States shifts further away from an agrarian society. A lack of understanding concerning how food and fiber is produced has created a widening gap between an increasingly urbanized consumer

base and the people who generate those products.

"Our job — yours and mine — is to bridge that gap," said Slaten.

Steve Foglesong, an Illinois cattleman whose term as NCBA president concluded during the convention, told the producer audience that they play a pivotal role in the Denver meetings. He said their response to industry challenges and the policy they shape will direct the industry during the year ahead. Foglesong recounted battles waged in the past year, noting a few losses and some big wins.

Listed among the latter was finally seeing,

Lessons from the last man down

Highlighting the Opening General Session of the 2011 Cattle Industry Convention was an emotional keynote address by New York Fire Department Deputy Chief Richard Picciotto, who aided in rescue efforts at the World Trade Center Sept. 11, 2001. Picciotto was in the North Tower for several hours, helping evacuate civilians and rescuers, when the building collapsed around him. Amazingly, he survived.

From that experience, Picciotto said he has three lessons to share with others.

► You have to remember priorities in your life. "Anytime there's a tragedy, you get very focused. Embrace what is important and don't lose sight of it," he shared. From his experience, Picciotto said family and friends are crucial.

► This country needs to stay united. "We need to agree to disagree. There is no room for



picking sides in organizations or politics. We need to try to fix what we can; we can't let our minor differences divide us," he said.

► "Faith, hope and charity are what got me through this," Picciotto said, adding, "That's what we do in this country is help those in need. Let's not forget that."

In closing, Picciotto emphasized the importance of remembering the troops that are dedicated to protecting and preserving the freedoms of America as well.

— by **Kindra Gordon**

Editor's Note: Picciotto's book documenting his account of the events of Sept. 11, 2001, and the aftermath is titled *Last Man Down*.

after 25 years of advocacy, government approval of a nutrition label for beef products. And NCBA input to head off apparent efforts to move Americans toward a more plant-based diet resulted in the recent release of updated USDA dietary guidelines that Foglesong termed “not too bad.”

He also noted how the U.S. secretary of agriculture had been convinced to take another, more critical look at a proposed Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) rule that, he said, threatened modern cattle marketing practices.

Probably the biggest win, said Foglesong, was gaining a two-year reprieve from a return to estate tax provisions that would threaten the future of many family cattle operations.

Foglesong said there are battles yet to win, including the fight against overregulation by government agencies. But there are indications, added Foglesong, that President Obama intends to rein in overzealous agencies, including GIPSA and especially the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), whose attempted regulatory overreach

threaten not only the beef industry but rural America in general.

“Mark my words and write this down,” Foglesong stated. “NCBA will join with other agricultural organizations, congressional leaders and other government officials to hold the president accountable to this commitment.”

Also speaking during the Opening General Session was Dan Dierschke, chairman of the CBB, which administers the dollar-per-head beef checkoff. He thanked Foglesong for his leadership during a compliance review of NCBA’s role as a contractor carrying out beef promotion programs funded by the

checkoff. In the checkoff, said Dierschke, beef producers have a self-help program that benefits the bottom line of every individual operation.

“Think about where we would be without it,” Dierschke said. “Checkoff programs improve our ability to survive difficult times and thrive in better times. Think about where we would be without programs aimed at improving opportunities for all producers, all brands and all products.”

The Opening Session audience was given

“We have to reinvent our relationship with government and bring it back to core values.”
— *John Hickenlooper*



a first look at a proposed Beef Industry Long-Range Plan, which a task force, with representation from multiple organizations, has drafted with the intent of meeting a vision of “An industry united around a common goal of being the world’s most trusted and preferred source of beef and beef products.”

The Plan outlines core strategies, including:

- ▶improving domestic consumer preference for beef;
- ▶capitalizing on global growth opportunities;
- ▶strengthening the image of beef and the beef industry;
- ▶protecting and enhancing beef producers’ freedom to operate;
- ▶improving industry trust, openness and relationships; and
- ▶positioning the U.S. cow herd for growth.

Convention attendees were urged to learn about the plan in more detail during subsequent meetings, including the Policy Division Forum.

