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by Larry A. Quinn

**SALUTE TO KANSAS SENATOR PAT ROBERTS** — Where do you start when you describe the career of Kansas U.S. **Senator Pat Roberts**? Did you know he is the only member of Congress in its history to serve as chairman and ranking member of both the House and Senate Agriculture Committees?

“We could go on and on and on, but there’s no doubt -- Pat Roberts’ work on behalf of farmers and ranchers across the country has left no doubt that he is and always will be a champion for agriculture,” said **Greg Akagi** (WIBW Radio/Kansas Agriculture Network, Topeka, Kansas).



“Before we talked with him about his 40-year career serving as a Kansas Congressman and Senator, we gave our Salute to Senator Roberts,” Akagi said. “The nearly 70-minute virtual salute was a look back through the eyes of those who worked for him, colleagues, and those who were fortunate to interview him.”

“As the Senator’s time wound down in the nation’s capitol and it was time to box everything up, he said one of

the things that brought back a lot of memories was the rather large stack from his days serving as chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee (2003-2007).

“It was all that intelligence business when we found out that Saddam (Hussein) didn’t have all the WMD (weapons of mass destruction) and the politics that followed,” Roberts said.

The Senator served as chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee during the time the investigation was taking place on the intelligence failures prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Senator Roberts says all the material will be sent to the Kansas State Historical Society.

“If there’s a standout accomplishment of Senator Roberts’ career, many would consider that to be the 1996 Farm Bill, which was also known as the ‘Freedom to Farm’ Act,” Akagi added.

Senator Roberts was then chairman of the House Agriculture Committee and looked back at many meetings he had in Ford County speaking with several ag groups. He talked about the issues with lack of funding for a farm bill and all the other programs within the farm bill. Roberts remembered a conversation with **Leon Torline**, who was from Spearville, Kansas, just east of Dodge City.

“Pat, I’m tired of all these government regulations. We’ve got so many programs that sometimes work and sometimes don’t. Sometimes we get money for them and sometimes we don’t. Why don’t you just give me the right to farm my farm the way I want to. Give me the freedom to farm,” Torline said.

Senator Roberts said that stuck with him, and he thought it was a good idea. The ‘96 Farm Bill included transition payments and the CRP program.

“We really tried to make it environmentally conscious, but also, when we’re going through tough times, provide for emergency haying and grazing. Today, farmers still don’t farm according to the dictation of the government. They farm with regards to what they think the market will be,” Roberts added.

Roberts emphasized that today, it’s a new circumstance.

“If a farmer doesn’t have access to technology or with the latest in ag research, or if we’re tossing tariffs around like lightning bolts, you get retaliation and you don’t have that market-oriented situation like I think we ought to have.”

Another action Senator Roberts was proud of was his work with former Nebraska **Senator Bob Kerry** on the Roberts-Kerry Bill (if you were in Kansas) or Kerry-Roberts Bill (if you were in Nebraska) on crop insurance. He's proud of the work to improve it then and now.

"That became the number-one issue to farmers and ranchers and growers across the country prior to the 2018 farm bill," Roberts said.

Senator Roberts also remembers the first time he met former **President Trump** with that topic in mind. Trump said, "What can I do for you?" Senator Roberts said, "Save crop insurance and improve it. It's the number one issue in farm country — all the people that brought you to the dance." The President asked, "Well, what's the problem?" Roberts replied, "In your budget, you really cut it."

Roberts said the President then got **Mick Mulvaney**, who at the time was the Director of the Office and Management and Budget, on the line.

"One problem," Roberts said, "is that the President forgot my name." Trump said, "Mick, farm guy here says that we're cutting crop insurance." Mulvaney said, "Mr. President, we're not cutting it, we're reforming it."

The Senator said he then used an example of what we have a lot of in the Dodge City feedlots.

"If you go ahead with these reforms," Roberts said, "you will take away crop insurance from large sections of the country, all of which voted for you. On the other hand, we produce more food and fiber for this country in those states that need crop insurance rather than these other states that will continue with it. You'll decimate the whole industry."

Senator Roberts said the President came back and said, "Mick, don't cut crop insurance."



**SOUTH DAKOTA SOYBEAN COUNCIL HONORS ROOK WITH VISIONARY LEADERSHIP AWARD** — One of America’s top farm broadcasters and market reporters, **Michelle Rook**, has been recognized by the South Dakota Soybean Research and Promotion Council with the 2020 Visionary Leadership Award.

“Rook is devoted to sharing the message of agriculture through journalism. It is through these communication talents she has made significant contributions to the agriculture industry,” said **Jerry Schmitz**, executive director of South Dakota Soybean Association & South Dakota Soybean Research and Promotion Council. “Her sincere interest and expertise have helped audiences better understand the commitment of family farmers in producing safe food, feed, fiber, and fuel.”

Rook is the managing farm director for WNAX Radio in Yankton, South Dakota. She leads a farm department that consistently has the highest farm audience ratings in the nation, and she anchors and oversees the production of nearly 50 news, weather, and marketcasts daily.

Rook also produces and anchors Agweek TV, a half-hour agricultural news program syndicated on stations throughout the region and Canada. Rook is a freelance reporter for nationally syndicated AgDay Television and U.S. Farm Report. She also served as a reporter and meteorologist for KTIV-TV and KMEG-TV in Sioux City, Iowa, and KSFY-TV in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Rook has reported from the fields of Brazil and the export ports in China, and she has covered the ratification of the U.S. Australia FTA from Canberra as well as farm policy from Capitol Hill.

Rook is a past president of NAFB (2006) and served on the national board for five years. She has been recognized for her journalistic excellence being named recipient of “The Doan” in 2015 for her series on the rail crisis in the Western Corn Belt. She was named NAFB Farm Broadcaster of the Year in 2008. In 2016, she received the South Dakota Governor’s Ag Ambassador Award. Rook also won the NAFB Horizon Award, NAFB Radio and Television Newscast and Marketcast Awards, numerous NAFB News Service Awards, and Associated Press recognition.

She has received media recognition from South Dakota Farm Bureau, South Dakota Soybean Association, South Dakota Corn Growers Association, South Dakota Pork Producers Council, South Dakota Farmers Union, Nebraska Agribusiness Association, and National Farmers Union.

She was named a Distinguished Alumnus by the South Dakota State University Journalism Department. She currently serves on the board of directors of South Dakota Ag and Rural Leadership.

Rook owns a video production and communications business, where she produces commercials, corporate videos, and other content focusing on agriculture. In this role she produces the Heartland Consumer Report, a TV news segment designed to help commodity organizations in the region educate consumers about agriculture. The reports have run on KELO-TV in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and KTTC-TV in Rochester, Minnesota. She also conducts media-training sessions and is a regular keynote speaker and emcee at events across the country.

Rook's agricultural roots are deeply imbedded in the upper Midwest region. She grew up on a dairy and crop farm in eastern South Dakota. She has bachelor's degrees in dairy manufacturing and ag journalism and a master's degree in journalism from South Dakota State University. Rook earned her broadcast meteorology degree from Mississippi State University. She was a South Dakota state FFA officer, an American FFA Degree recipient, and a national FFA officer candidate. Rook also was involved in 4-H for 11 years.

"Growing up on the farm, I always had a passion for agriculture," explained Rook. "My goal has always been to provide farmers the news and market information they need daily to run their operations. However, with the shrinking voice of agriculture and the growing disconnect between farmers and consumers, I saw a need to provide accurate information to the general public about the industry. It is vital that consumers understand where their food comes from and why agriculture is important to the overall economy."

**TEXAS FARM BUREAU RADIO NETWORK SIGNS 100th STATION** — The Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network (Waco, Texas) signed its 100th radio station, reaching the largest number of affiliates in the network’s 19-year history.



“We are thankful to the more than 100 radio stations that affiliate with us to bring the latest agricultural and rural news to their communities,” Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network Manager **Carey Martin** said. “It’s a huge milestone for us, and we’re overjoyed in reaching it. It’s a great opportunity to share the stories of Texas farmers and ranchers who grow our food, fiber, and fuel.”

The network specializes in programming for the agricultural audience, covering state legislative and regulatory issues, crop and livestock conditions, market information and analysis, and national policy issues from Washington, D.C.

According to the 2019 AMR Farm Radio Listening Study, the Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network had the largest farm and ranch listening audience in Texas.

“That audience is much bigger now, thanks to the addition of more than 40 radio stations in the last year,” Martin added.

A new revenue sharing model has played a big role in the recent growth. The network shares its advertising revenue with the radio stations that air Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network programming.

“The more programs they air, the more revenue potential they have,” Martin said. “Stations find that very attractive, especially when the ongoing pandemic has cut sharply into local radio advertising.”

The network has the largest and most-experienced farm news team in Texas, anchored by **Martin, Tom Nicolette**, and **Jessica Domel**. New reporter additions have strengthened the programming lineup, including Texas Panhandle reporter **James Hunt** and livestock auction market reporter **Larry Marble**.

“James Hunt has been a fixture in the Panhandle as a farm broadcaster and radio talk show host for decades, and Larry Marble has been reporting on Texas livestock auctions for more than 25 years,” Martin said. “We’re happy to add that extensive knowledge and experience to our team.”

The network also recently launched a daily farm news podcast, Texas Ag Today. Several radio stations air the podcast as a long-form morning farm and ranch news program.

Two-thirds of the network’s affiliated radio stations air all the programs offered.

“It’s a great relationship that allows us to support agricultural communities across Texas by providing the news and market information that they may not hear otherwise,” Martin said. “Also, we can support locally owned, small-town radio stations by sharing our advertising revenue, helping them to stay on the air and provide a valuable service to their communities.”

To find a station that airs Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network programming in your area, visit <https://texasfarmbureau.org/radio>.



## **WILLIAMS RECEIVES PENNSYLVANIA AWARD —**

**Dave Williams** (Pennsylvania Farm Country Road and PCN Country Roads Network, White Mills, Pennsylvania) is the recipient of the 2021 Gerald W. Reichard Memorial Impact Award.

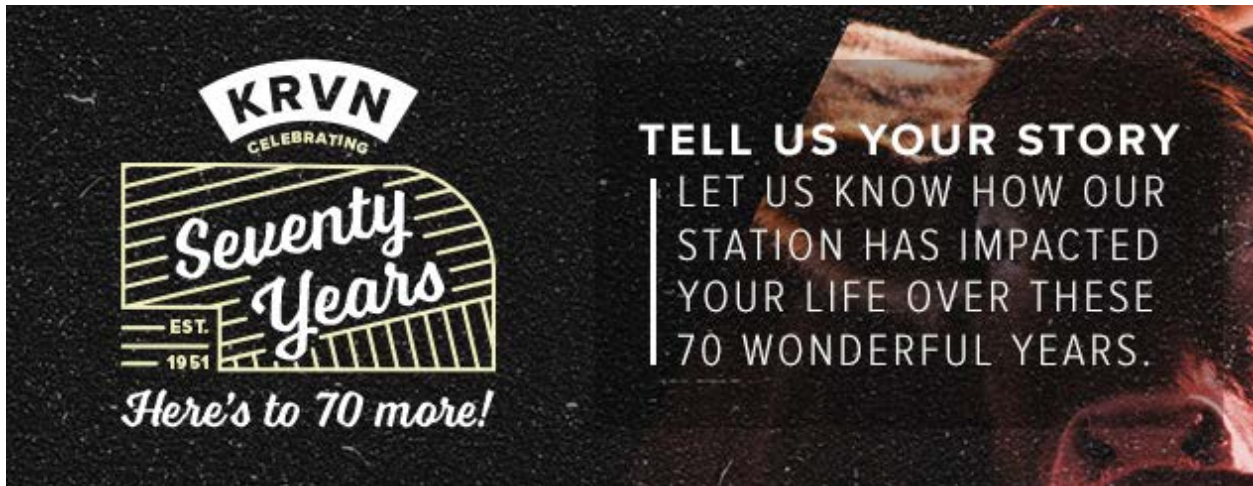
The Gerald W. Reichard Memorial Impact Award is given to someone who has had significant overall impact on the Pennsylvania Farm Show. Reichard was a veteran and educator who volunteered countless hours to Farm Show as Expo Hall floor manager prior to his death in 2016. His relationship with vendors and exhibitors helped create a great Farm Show experience for the public and exhibitors alike.



“Pulling off a virtual Farm Show amid constant changes thrown at us by the pandemic was no small feat,” Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary **Russell C. Redding** said. “We are forever grateful to those who supplied outstanding virtual exhibits to illustrate Pennsylvania agriculture’s excellence and share the opportunities and promise our industry holds for a bright future. Dave Williams has been a valuable partner in telling those stories over many decades, and we are pleased to recognize his passion for the people of Pennsylvania agriculture and the industry that feeds our economy, our families, and the world.”

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture is committed to a sustainable and safe supply of food and agricultural products in the commonwealth – from the farm to the table – and to being good stewards of the land and Pennsylvania’s natural resources. The department promotes the viability of farms, protects consumers, and safeguards the health of people, plants, animals, and the environment.





**KRVN CELEBRATES 70 YEARS OF SERVING LISTENERS IN RURAL AMERICA** – The Rural Voice of Nebraska celebrated 70 years of broadcasting weather, news, and agriculture information to listeners across Nebraska, Kansas, and Colorado on February 1, reports **Bryce Doeschot**, farm broadcaster and video specialist.

KRVN, which signed onto the air in 1951, commemorated its 70-year anniversary with a special all-day celebration that featured fond memories shared by listeners and guest appearances from former KRVN legends. Throughout the day, former KRVN legends including **Dave Thorell**, **Don Colvin**, and **Dewey Nelson** shared memories on-air with listeners.

To view video clips of the commemoration, visit <https://youtu.be/LjuV6T2bdbQ>

In addition, Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts made a special announcement on air, proclaiming February 1 as KRVN Day in Nebraska.

To view the Governor's proclamation on the KRVN Facebook page, visit <https://www.facebook.com/krvnradio/photos/a.321611847318/10158786264567319/>

KRVN is owned and operated by the Nebraska Rural Radio Association (NRRRA). The NRRRA was incorporated in June 1948, following severe winter weather conditions that claimed the lives of livestock and people, prompting the need for radio coverage across the state. Since 2002, KRVN has been part of the Rural Radio Network, which is made up of 15 AM and FM stations across Nebraska.

**WE WANT YOUR NEWS** — Send us your stories and photos for future newsletter issues. Contact Larry Quinn at [larryquinn@outlook.com](mailto:larryquinn@outlook.com) or phone at **703-819-6532**. *Airing on the Side of Agriculture* is included in the blog section of [NAFB.com](http://NAFB.com). For an archive copy of any past issues, go to **Membership** and click on ***Airing on the Side of Agriculture***.

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