

## Our City

My trip to Washington D.C. didn't go exactly as scheduled; but, in the end it turned out just fine. Monday, April 29<sup>th</sup> was the National Teacher of the Year induction and ceremony. And, it started out pretty much as I suspected that it would with the Education Secretary, Betsy DeVos, reading prepared remarks to us about things of little relevance to public education. At the conclusion of her presentation DeVos invited the National Teacher of the Year, Rodney Robinson, to the stage and presented him with a crystal apple, his award. Then things began to get a bit weird as a panel of four white men from the Department of Education spoke to us about the importance of diversity and equity in public education. They followed that up with a question and answer session that was cut very short after three questions and left many of us with questions left unanswered. It was all a bit strange, honestly.

Then it got stranger. The teachers who had brought guests were asked to have their guest proceed to a reception without the rest of us. We were then asked to turn in our phones and smart watches to the Secret Service. At which point we were walked from the Eisenhower Building to the West Wing of the White House and 55 of us were crammed into the reception area where we waited and wondered what was going on. There was really only one reason to be there, I thought. I was wrong. There were two. After about 20 minutes and a history lesson on the paintings in the small room Vice-President Pence came through a door and started shaking hands with some of the teachers in the center of the room; I was in a far back corner. The White House photographer took a picture of most of the room with Pence in the middle and then he left. Ten minutes later we were ushered down a hall and into the Oval Office. President Trump stood in the middle of the room and greeted those in first. Once we were all in we were ushered behind the President as he sat down at the desk. He spoke a few words about what a great experience we must be having, a picture was taken, a door was opened again and we left. A few of the teachers actually got to shake the President's hand prior to leaving; which was cool for them and they came away very pleased to have done so. On a side note, it was super cool to have been in the White House, the West Wing reception area where all world leaders enter to meet a President, the Oval Office was very impressive with its iconic paintings, busts and statues. I will long remember it and appreciate the opportunity provided me; a once in a life time thing for sure.

The rest of the week went pretty much as scheduled. My visits with Representative Simpson, Senator Risch and Senator Crapo went well. We talked a bit about me being the Idaho Teacher of the Year (TOY), but most of the time we spent discussing immigration and citizenship for children and Dreamers. The talks were insightful. I hope they turn productive. Our three legislators seem willing to meet in the middle on immigration and Dreamers. I am trying to coordinate with other TOYs, to find Democratic legislators willing to do the same.

This was all brought full circle last night at our annual FFA Chapter Banquet when I was chatting with a local supporter who related the difficulty they had had getting their H2A workers from Mexico this year; it was much more difficult than in the past. The problem is real and has long been so. I don't know if I can make a difference, but agriculture needs a solution and I owe it to my students to try, it's a good fit for me at this point in my career.

Our Chapter officers awarded five Honorary Chapter FFA Degrees to those partners who have gone above and beyond the normal in support of the Chapter and its members. Degrees were awarded to Jon Schutte, Shane Porath, Alan Woodworth, Courtney Knickrehm and Dustin and Honi Allen. For years of continued unsurpassed service and support to the Chapter Distinguished Service Awards were given to Rick Phillips of the J.R. Simplot Company, Lance and Lisa Funk along with Dennise and Jeff Burgemeister. Dennise Burgemeister then awarded \$12,000 in scholarships to six graduating seniors pursuing careers and degrees in or related to agriculture. As I took the picture of the 2019 – 2020 Chapter officers I realized that for the first time ever our officer team truly represented our demographic both ethnically and socioeconomically. Diversity and equity are indeed achievable. A tribute to all of our supporters and sponsors that neither where you come from nor the means by which you live shall be a reason you do not fit into our Chapter.

It is a step. I look forward to making more and welcome those who would take them with me.

Until next week...