

House Appropriations Government Operations Subcommittee

Steve Lee

1. 40+ year 1st generation cattle rancher
2. 20 years as a McLean County Commissioner, just starting 6th term
3. Currently serving as President of North Dakota Association of Counties (NDACO)

NDACO, representing all 53 counties in North Dakota, passed a resolution at our annual conference in October, encouraging increased state compensation for extension agents. The states salary contribution for extension agents has not kept pace with other costs or competition from private sector employers, making it difficult to attract new agents and retain current staff.

NDSU Extension and North Dakota counties have a unique partnership:

NDSU Extension provides:

1. 50% of extension agent salaries
2. 100% of extension agent benefits
3. 100% of training for extension agents

County partners provide:

1. 50% of extension agent salaries
2. 100% of office space, furnishings, cell and landline telephone, and utilities
3. 100% of transportation costs for extension work and ongoing training
4. 100% of salary and benefits for support staff

We are requesting additional state support for extension agent salaries realizing that this will also increase the salary support cost for county partners. The counties agree that this additional expense is necessary to attract and retain quality extension agents.

The McLean County extension office has two extension agent positions and one full time support position. We currently have one open agent position that, as of last week, had zero applicants, and there are several other open positions around the state.

Years ago, NDSU extension agents provided information about crops and livestock. While they still do that, those agents now provide assistance with horticulture in urban and rural areas, succession planning, senior programs, nutritional programs, youth programs, and many other programs and services. NDSU extension provides programs and services to every segment of North Dakota's population.

I strongly encourage you to support increased compensation for NDSU Extension Agents so the state and county partners can continue to provide these services to all of the citizens of North Dakota.