



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release, August 24, 2015

Contact: Mary Coppola

mcoppola@unitedfresh.org

202-303-3425

United Fresh Celebrates 20 Years of Member Advocacy on Capitol Hill
2015 Marks the 20th Anniversary of the Washington Conference

WASHINGTON, D.C. (August 24, 2015) – This September, the United Fresh Produce Association will mark the 20th anniversary of the United Fresh Washington Conference. Formerly known as the United Fresh Washington Public Policy Conference, the Association first formally brought members to Capitol Hill in 1995 to meet with government leaders in an effort to advance produce industry issues.

Over the past twenty years, the Conference has hosted a number of congressional influencers and Administration officials. Conference attendees have welcomed every Secretary of Agriculture in addition to HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson, and Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez. Notable elected leaders Sen. Tom Harkin (IA); Sen. Debbie Stabenow (MI); Sen. Saxby Chambliss (GA); Sen. Pat Roberts (KS); Speaker of the House, John Boehner (OH); Rep. Sam Farr (CA); Rep. Collin Peterson (MN); former Rep. Dennis Cardoza (CA); former Rep. and now Agriculture Commissioner of Florida Adam Putnam (FL); and the 1996 Republican Presidential nominee and war hero Robert Dole of Kansas have also addressed attendees. Conference history is currently playing a role in the 2016 presidential debate as candidates Senator Lindsay Graham (SC) and former Senator Rick Santorum (PA), both past speakers at the Washington Conference, have entered their bids for the Oval Office.

In 2001, Senator Tom Harkin introduced at the Washington Conference the concept of providing a “free fresh fruit and vegetable snack” for every student in the country. One year later, the 2002 Farm Bill included a four-state pilot program called the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. Today, this program is being used in all 50 states where over 4 million low income elementary students receive a fresh fruit or vegetable snack every day at school. During the 2008, and most recently 2013 Washington Conference, industry attendees marched to Capitol Hill and successfully advocated for funding in the Farm Bill focusing on trade, research, pest and disease eradication, and market development resulting in the most significant investment of federal resources in the history of U.S. agriculture policy for the fruit and vegetable industry. Attendees have influenced important debates driving congressional direction on reauthorization of the Perishable Agriculture Commodities Act (PACA) in the mid-1990’s, mandatory country of origin labeling for fruits and vegetables (2002-2008), and the modernization of our country’s food safety laws with the passage of the Food Safety Modernization Act in 2010.

Approximately 100 industry leaders attended the Conference in 1995. By 2005, an increased presence was felt when 280 attendees marched to the Capitol Hill. This year – twenty years later – United Fresh will accompany nearly 600 industry leaders in Washington, D.C. to urge action from Congress on topics such as water, H-2A and nutrition.

“The Washington Conference has a long history of prompting action in Congress,” said Tom Stenzel, United Fresh’s President and CEO. “With Child Nutrition Reauthorization in the balance, drought spreading it’s effect past California for a 4th consecutive season and critical H-2A rules on the table, it has never been more important then now for Congress to hear directly from fresh produce industry leaders how their votes will impact businesses and the industry overall.”

Although the event itself has only formally convened since 1995, United Fresh has been hosting an

annual public policy event for nearly 70 years, since moving headquarters to Washington, D.C. in 1943. Originally called the Congress of Committees, the annual event was a time for volunteer leaders of the Association to come together in Washington to conduct business meetings and share their views with the nation's political leaders. Today, the Association's volunteer leaders still meet at the Washington Conference to conduct association business prior to their participation in two days of policy education, networking with industry peers and meeting with their Congressmen on Capitol Hill.

As the event continues to draw a larger constituency of produce industry leaders, United Fresh too expands the offerings of the event. Equally important to educating executives is the need to educate the up-and-comers of our industry. The Rising Leaders Seminar was created to do just that. For the second year, United Fresh is bringing in advocacy educators to share the ins and outs of engaging with Congress, industry leaders to emphasize the important role advocacy plays when businesses come together in support of an issue or solution, and forward thinking influencers to encourage the young professionals of our industry to stay informed, aware and engaged of what takes place in Washington.

This year, Washington Conference attendees will take part in strategic, face-to-face dialogue with key members of Congress, their staff and top regulatory officials. The event includes education sessions on today's issues facing the industry and various networking activities with industry peers. Attendees will hear from General Michael Hayden, former Director of both the CIA and NSA; a panel of School Foodservice Directors diving into the details of school lunch requirements; Rep. Tim Ryan, Rep. David Valadeo, Rep. Rodney Davis and political personality Tucker Carlson. To register, visit <http://www.unitedfresh.org/events-programs/annual-washington-conference/>

For more information about The Washington Conference, September 28-30, contact Angela Tiwari at atiwari@unitedfresh.org or call 202-303-3416.

###

About United Fresh Produce Association

Founded in 1904, the United Fresh Produce Association brings together companies across every segment of the fresh produce supply chain, including growers, shippers, fresh cut processors, wholesalers, distributors, retailers, foodservice operators, industry suppliers and allied associations. We empower industry leaders to shape sound government policy. We deliver the resources and expertise companies need to succeed in managing complex business and technical issues. We provide the training and development individuals need to advance their careers in produce. Through these endeavors, we unite our industry with a common purpose – to build long-term value for our members and grow produce consumption. For more information, visit www.unitedfresh.org