



News Release

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FFA Student Leaders Meet with President George W. Bush and Attend the FFA State Presidents' Conference

WASHINGTON, D.C.—FFA state presidents and the national FFA officers had the experience of a lifetime meeting with President George W. Bush at the White House Thursday during the FFA State Presidents' Conference in Washington, D.C., July 28.

The president spent forty minutes with the group of agricultural science education students, answering their questions and posing for a picture in the State Dining Room. The national FFA officers presented the president with a plaque expressing appreciation for his public service to the nation.

President Bush spoke about his ranch in Texas and his love for the land. He described how the ranch is being prepared for a new enterprise of propagating native grasses to be sold for charity. Asked to cite a major influence in his life, the president credited the Reverend Billy Graham. He also stressed his commitment to protect the rights of American citizens to worship freely as they may choose. Discussing education policy, President Bush reiterated the need for achievement testing whenever schools receive federal dollars. Regarding curriculum, he said local districts and states should decide what is to be taught in local schools.

Before meeting with the president, the group met with U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns and other USDA officials at the Department of Agriculture. The secretary, himself a former FFA member from Nebraska, credited much of what he had accomplished in business and government service to the training and leadership

experiences he received through agricultural education and the FFA. The secretary added he was most proud of the fact that he was raised on a dairy farm where he learned “lessons of life” by caring for animals. The national officers presented Secretary Johanns with artwork depicting the 70-year evolution of the distinctive FFA blue corduroy jacket.

On Friday, the FFA group met with congressional representatives. Attendees at the conference (state FFA presidents and one additional officer from their state) represented all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. They shared common goals of strengthening skills in leadership and citizenship, discussing national FFA business and learning more about the nation’s heritage in the capital city. The group attended the conference to prepare for their responsibilities as delegates and committee chairs at the 2005 National FFA Convention in Louisville, Ky., Oct. 26-29.

The five-day FFA State Presidents’ Conference is planned and conducted by the team of six national FFA officers. The state officers attending the conference will use the information and skills they gained to train chapter officers representing almost a half-million FFA members in more than 7,300 local schools.

Additional activities during the conference included visits to the Jefferson Memorial, Arlington National Cemetery, the Lincoln Memorial, the FDR Memorial and other historic landmarks. The officers also attended daily leadership seminars focused on enhancing FFA and agricultural science education.

The Chevrolet Motor Division and GMAC (General Motors Acceptance Corporation) sponsor the FFA State Presidents’ Conference as a special project of the National FFA Foundation.

FFA is a national youth organization of more than 490,000 student members preparing for leadership and careers in the science, business and technology of agriculture with 7,223 local chapters in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. FFA strives to make a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for **premier leadership, personal growth and career success** through agricultural science education. Visit www.ffa.org for more information and http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/07/images/20050728_p072805pm-0015jasjp-515h.html for a White House photo of the officers’ visit with President Bush.

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