

**Statement**  
**Jeffery S. Hall**  
**Board Member and Acting Chief Executive Officer**  
**Farm Credit Administration Board Meeting**  
**June 13, 2019**

On May 21, 2019, Farm Credit Administration Chairman Dallas Tonsager passed away. We lost more than the chairman of our agency, we lost a respected colleague and a true champion for rural America.

He was raised on a dairy farm near Oldham, South Dakota, and earned his bachelor's degree in mechanized agriculture at South Dakota State. He spent the earlier years of his life farming with his brother Doug and serving in advocacy roles with the South Dakota Farmers Union through the 1980s farm crisis and into the 1990s.

He served two terms as president of the South Dakota Farmers Union, from 1988 to 1993, after which he was named by President Bill Clinton to be USDA's state director for rural development in South Dakota, a job he held until Clinton left office in 2001.

From 1990 to 1993, he was a member of the advisory board for the Commodity Futures Trading Commission. From 2002 to 2004, he was the executive director of the South Dakota Value-Added Agriculture Development Center, a nonprofit that helped the development of new ventures to create economic opportunity for farmers. That is when I first met Dallas — when he came to Kentucky for a conference.

In 2004, he was confirmed to serve on the FCA board. Dallas left FCA in 2009 when President Obama nominated him to be undersecretary for rural development at USDA, a position he served in until 2013. While at USDA, he oversaw an expansion of rural broadband development, expanded the department's water and wastewater programs, increased funding for first- and second-generation biofuels production, and established venture capital funds.

In 2014, Dallas and I were nominated to serve on the FCA board and were finally confirmed in March of 2015. It was his second time to serve on the FCA board, and he holds the distinction of serving the most time as a board member. Dallas was appointed chairman in November of 2016, succeeding Ken Spearman. During his career, he held four presidentially appointed positions at USDA and FCA, and was appointed by three presidents from both political parties.

I have asked a few people who worked most closely with Dallas to offer some memories.

Wendy Laguarda, our inspector general and former executive assistant to Dallas, said:

*Everyone who came in contact with Dallas professionally was helped. He certainly helped my career.*

David Grahn, who worked with Dallas at both USDA and FCA, commented:

*Dallas was a decent man and passionate advocate for rural America. At USDA and FCA, he challenged me and everyone he worked with to find ways to improve the quality of life in rural America.*

Todd Batta, who worked with him at USDA and was his last executive assistant at FCA, said:

*Dallas was truly an extraordinary and humble public servant. He worked hard to support and build a strong rural America. And he always remained his authentic self — that small dairy farmer from Oldham, South Dakota. He was a great friend, mentor, and leader. We will all miss him.*

Charlie Rawls, our chief counsel, who worked with Dallas over the past 20 years, shared his memories:

*A few things occur to me to say about Dallas. First, he was just a remarkably kind and caring man. He was always interested in you and your family, and whatever problem or concern might be on your mind. Not that he wasn't also extremely passionate about the things he cared about. Obviously, farmers, ranchers, and rural communities were always at the top of that list. But never in the name of his own agenda would he insist on enforcing his often-rightful authority.*

*He would never think of making an important decision without a full discussion and airing of disagreements. He was not reluctant or embarrassed to change his mind or modify a decision. It seems that he was actually persuaded by the better argument! He asked good and insightful questions. He made hard decisions and was actually willing to take responsibility for having done so. That is so refreshing and remarkable among political leaders.*

*Meanwhile, he succeeded in keeping a good humor and positive outlook. He treated each of us with respect and grace. That came easy because he was fundamentally authentic, and it all came from the heart. He genuinely respected your knowledge and experience. Even when he disagreed with the information or advice given. He freely debated and enjoyed a good argument. At the end of a spirited discussion, he was happy to put differences aside and enjoy the simple fellowship of human connection.*

*Dallas was a good soul and a very unique individual. I will miss him. Prayers for him, Sharon, and his family.*

It is still difficult to believe Dallas is gone. Just two months ago he and I participated in a hearing before a House subcommittee. He did an excellent job as always and fielded every question from members. Dallas received many honors over his career. All of them earned. A humble man, he never sought glory for his many accomplishments; it was just his way of making rural America better. He leaves a legacy that should be respected and admired.