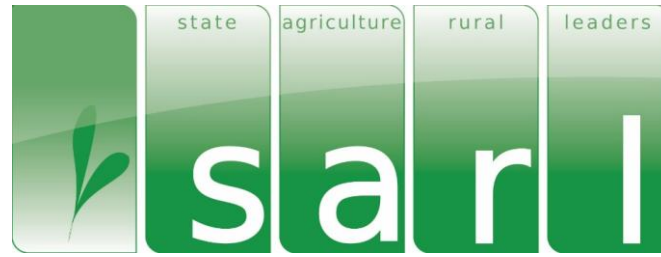


U.S. Agriculture: Challenges & Priorities

October 7, 2026

Kay Johnson Smith
SARL Executive Director



Since 2002, State Agriculture and Rural Leaders (SARL) has provided a forum for fostering cooperation, leadership and educational opportunities among and for state and provincial legislators who are passionate about agriculture and rural communities.

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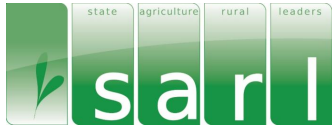
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Farm Profitability Pressure

- Rising production and operating costs leading to increased food costs
- Volatile commodity prices
- Higher interest rates and equipment costs
- Increasing financial risk for producers
- **Land tax appraisals** – farm purchase price vs market pressure pricing
- Strong domestic and international markets - need to expand market access for U.S. agricultural products
- Promote “Made in America” agriculture at home and abroad
- Trade disputes and tariffs create uncertainty



Technology Advancements – The Need to Build a Framework to Support

- Tools in the “Toolbox” need to be preserved/enhanced – not restricted
 - Genetics and breeding
 - Seed treatment
 - Animal health and nutrition research
 - Drones
 - Farm equipment and technology
 - Bio-based materials for energy enhancement
 - AI



Farm Security, Food Safety and National Security

- Biosecurity coordination among farmers, agencies & states
- Animal disease management & coordination (AI, NWS, Ticks & more)
- Invest in **water infrastructure** and conservation (dams, water reservoirs, aquifers, treatment facilities, etc.)
- Invest in other **infrastructure** (roads, bridges, power plants, electrical grids, airports, data centers, broadband etc.)
- Strengthen preparedness for drought, floods, extreme weather and disease
- Foreign land ownership



The Need for a Reliable Workforce

- Labor shortages affect many agricultural sectors
 - Specialty crops, livestock and aquaculture are particularly vulnerable
- Producers need a reliable, legal workforce
- Workforce policy must reflect the realities of modern agriculture



Rural Healthcare & Veterinary Care

- Innovative ideas to attract & maintain rural healthcare facilities and medical professionals
- Health insurance access and affordability
- Mental health support for rural and agricultural families
- Innovative ideas to attract & maintain farm animal veterinary care professionals and services



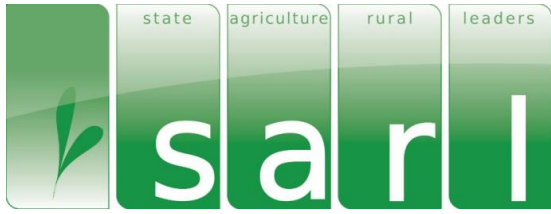
Producers Need the Tools to Manage/Reduce Risk

- Strengthen the agricultural safety net
- Improve disaster assistance, crop and livestock insurance
- Support conservation and agricultural research
- Provide predictable programs producers can count on
- Eliminate Extended Producer Responsibility laws on farmers – more burden for providing food to consumer



Let Producers Produce & Invest in the Next Generation

- Reduce duplicative and unnecessary regulations
- Improve coordination among government agencies
- Promote **science-based, risk-based regulation**
- Support beginning and young farmers
- Improve access to land, credit and capital
- Encourage & support farm succession and family-business continuity
- Develop innovative policies to encourage more small businesses
- Invest in research, innovation and technology



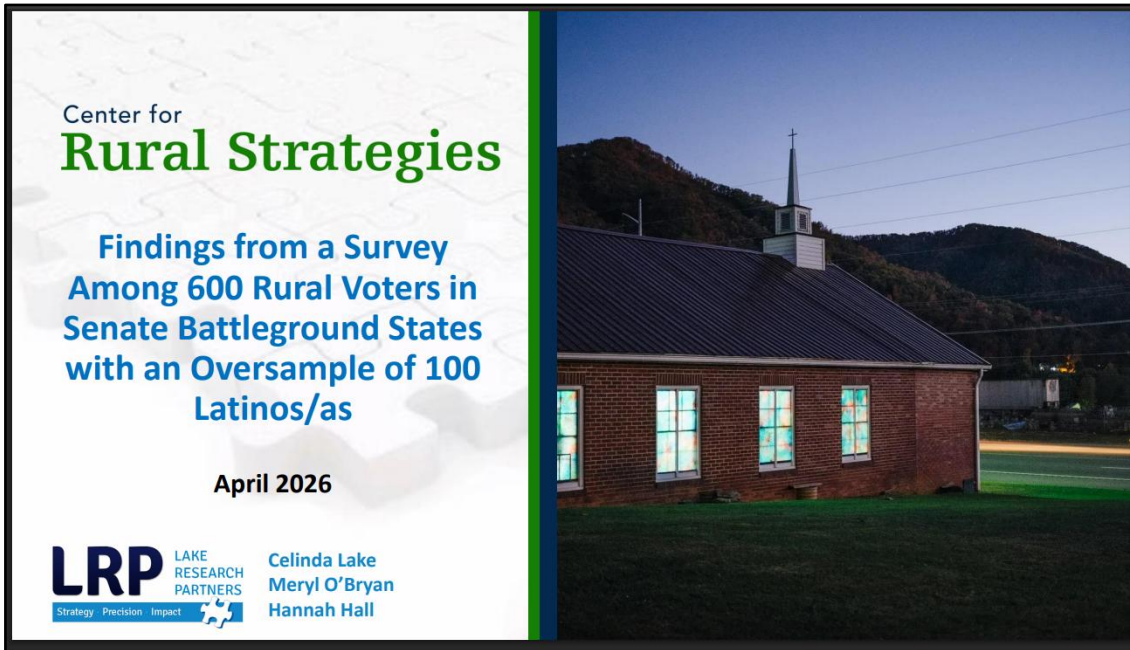
You're Invited!

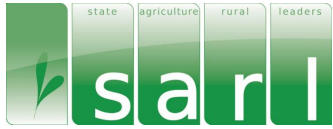
**October 16, 2026
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THANK YOU!

Contact Me for More Information

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