

01/04/2003 Entry: "Cattle Industry Welcomes Opening of Washington, D.C., Office and Appointment of Washington, D.C., Coordinator"

United Stockgrowers of America

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Cattle Industry Welcomes Opening of Washington, D.C., Office and Appointment of Washington, D.C., Coordinator

Billings, MT—Following a tremendously successful Fall Run membership and fundraising campaign, the nation's fastest growing U.S. cattle association, R-CALF United Stockgrowers of America (R-CALF USA), is opening a Washington, D.C., office to further strengthen the voice of the U.S. cattle industry. Ranchers and rural businesses in seven states raised over \$170,000 from the sales of 30 donated calves this fall to help open a full-time Washington, D.C., office. In addition, nearly 3,000 new cattle producers joined R-CALF USA in 2002, bringing its total membership to over 7,700 members, and representing a membership growth of 53 percent for the year. "I'm pleased to announce that, because of this tremendous support, R-CALF USA is now positioned to open a Washington, D.C., office and we will do so on February 3, 2003. I'm also pleased to announce that we have appointed Trent W. Thomas as our Washington, D.C., Coordinator," said R-CALF USA President Leo McDonnell.

Mr. Thomas is currently the Legislative Director for Texas House of Representatives Legislator Robert "Bob" Turner. Rep. Turner was first elected in 1991 and quickly moved into leadership positions. As a conservative Democrat and member of both the Texas Conservative Coalition and Texas Rural Caucus, Rep. Turner had a close working relationship with then Republican Governor George W. Bush and Democrat Speaker Pete Laney. Together they worked for passage of the largest property tax reduction in Texas history. Rep. Turner served on the Interim Select Committee on Agriculture Policy and was named to the Ag Policy Board. Texas Governor Rick Perry appointed Rep. Turner to the Governor's Task Force on Homeland Security. Representative Turner is retiring on January 13, 2003.

Mr. Thomas was responsible for maintaining relations with the 73rd Legislative District in the Texas House of Representatives, which encompasses seventeen west and central Texas counties with approximately 137,000 constituents. He also supervised legislation for the Representative and was the lead staff advisor assisting in the creation of the Office of Rural Community Affairs, Agricultural Policy Board, Rural Community Investment Program, and the Texas Rural

Caucus, all of which were created to promote and encourage life in the rural areas. Mr. Thomas has also served on many educational panels discussing the welfare of the agricultural industry.

Mr. Thomas has a vast knowledge of local and state government policies and the legislative process and has developed strong relationships with the Legislature and state agencies. He was instrumental in furthering agriculture issues, providing health care, and promoting economic development to the rural areas of Texas. Mr. Thomas worked effectively with various Senate and House committees, and he coordinated administrative rule-making processes with state agencies. "Mr. Thomas' background and experience in legislative and administrative processes will enhance our organization's effectiveness on congressional and trade issues important to the U.S. cattle industry," McDonnell commented.

Mr. Thomas is a native of Brownwood, TX, where he and his parents raised registered cattle, horses, and sheep. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Agriculture Services and Development and a Master's Degree in Agriculture Education from Tarleton State University in Stephenville, TX.

Mr. Thomas will join the R-CALF USA staff beginning January 3, 2003. He will spend time meeting with R-CALF USA members in various states prior to attending R-CALF USA's upcoming Fourth Annual Convention in Kansas City, MO, January 23-25, 2003. "Although we've had two D.C. law firms on retainer to assist us in addressing cattle-producer concerns, the addition of a D.C. Office and full-time D.C. staff will further help R-CALF USA to meet both its short-term and long-term goals," McDonnell said.

"I'm looking forward to working for the cattle producing members of R-CALF USA who have demonstrated the will and courage needed to direct the future of their industry," said Thomas. "This is an organization that has already achieved effective results by expressing its concerns with authority and offering realistic solutions. I'm honored to be a part of this team," he added.

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The Ranchers Cattlemen Action Legal Fund, United Stockgrowers of America (R-CALF USA) is a national cattle producers association representing over 7,700 independent cow/calf producers, backgrounders and feeders in 42 states. Over 30 state and local associations are affiliated with R-CALF USA, representing thousands of additional producers. For more information, go to www.rcalf.com