

Enid News and Eagle

Challenges Still Lie Ahead for Farm-Friendly Ag Chief January 15, 2009

Tom Vilsack knows what he's getting into.

A former governor of Iowa, Vilsack is President-elect Barack Obama's choice to become agriculture secretary. He appears to be coasting to confirmation, as he enjoys widespread support from both Republicans and Democrats.

Our own U.S. Rep. Frank Lucas, ranking member of the House Agriculture Committee, said Vilsack is "a fine choice for secretary of agriculture." He also said Vilsack "understands the challenges facing American farmers and ranchers."

As agriculture secretary, Vilsack is going to face some daunting challenges.

Foremost among them is putting the \$290 billion farm bill that was enacted last year into place. That's going to be a big enough task, but he's also going to have to deal with the recession griping the country. Rural areas are not immune to hard economic times, as we all know.

Vilsack has said he wants to boost the economies of farm communities, promote nutritious foods and help poor families put meals on the table.

Since he was governor of one of the leading farm states in the union, he understands the challenges faced by rural and farm communities and their contribution to keeping the food supply sustainable for a long time to come.

How much can be accomplished with the economy the way it is and with the burgeoning budget deficit remains to be seen.

However, We have hopes for Vilsack's leadership and its potential benefits to farm communities.