

Turning Down the Heat: Negotiating Wildfire Prevention and Recovery Confidential Information for Staffer for Senator Jordan Jacobs

Character Sheet

Republican Professional Staffer to the Senate Agriculture Committee Ranking Member, Sen. Jordan Jacobs (R-Laramie).

Sen. Jordan Jacobs (R-LR)

You work for Senator Jacobs, who took over the leading Republican Ranking role on the Senate Ag Committee at the beginning of this Congress. Sen. Jacobs is the senior senator from Laramie, a large Western state. Your boss is a common-sense Republican who believes in balanced budgets and reducing government spending wherever possible. He notably voted against the recent bipartisan budget deal that the President struck with the Republican Speaker and Democrat Senate Majority Leader to lift budget caps. While he has been the Ranking Member of the Senate Ag for just over a year, he has built a fairly productive relationship with long-serving Chairwoman Danvers (Senate Ag, D-Fremont), as has your team.

Laramie

Despite being heavily wooded, the wildfires have not affected Laramie much. Lumber is one of the largest industries in Laramie, however, so you have been in fairly consistent communication with the head of the National Timber and Pulp Association (NTPA) about the situation. There is also a large company, Cannacorp, in the state that manufactures firefighting equipment – mostly air tankers and water scoopers.

This simulation was written by Kessely Hong, Lecturer in Public Policy, John Fogarty, Monica Giannone, and Emily Schlichting at the Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard University (HKS) as part of the Harvard Kennedy School's "Teaching Legislative Negotiation Project." These materials were developed with support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. HKS simulations are developed solely as the basis for class discussion. They are not intended to serve as endorsements, sources of primary data, or illustrations of effective or ineffective management.

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Your Background

You are from Laramie, but moved to Washington, DC ten years ago to work on forest policy issues. While you've worked in the House before, this is your first job as professional committee staff and first job in the Senate. However, your hands-on experience has given you a real leg up. You have a Master's in Forestry Science from the University of Laramie and worked on related issues at the state and local level before moving into federal policy.

This bill was your first large negotiation in the Senate and you're not completely happy with where things landed. Luckily, the House Republicans were able to add in some provisions that covered some of the concessions you and your boss were backed into during the Senate process. That said, you know your boss is still not pleased with how high the budget caps were lifted. Walking out with a bill that reduces the ten-year spending limit would be a real victory for you within your office.

Supplemental Background Emails

To: You (Jacobs' Office, Senate Ag)

From: Stivers, Jon (Jacobs' Office, Senate Ag)

Date: May 25th

Subject: WPRA conference items

Thanks for letting me know your thoughts on our general approach – I think it tracks well with what we've discussed. Just chatted with Senator Jacobs and have a few items below that you should keep in mind going into these conversations.

I know we played a bit nicer than we wanted in the Senate negotiations and gave the Danvers' staff some real ground – but Senator Jacobs felt it was important to keep the tone of their relationships positive given that this is Jacobs' first year as the Ranking Member of this committee. However, the dynamic for this conference is different. We do not need this bill as much as some of the other parties – it matters more that we hold certain lines and not appear as pushovers for the second go-round with Danvers and House Democrats.

Fremont is really suffering as a state and we want to help, but as it stands there is not much for Laramie to gain from this bill. Where possible, you should work to align with Chairman Smith's staff to gain back some ground.

A few things to keep in mind:

- I know we didn't land where we wanted on spending in the Senate bill, so your top priority should be bringing down the number of the ten-year budget cap in Sec. 1.
- A reminder that we *really* want to keep this bill fully in Senate Ag's jurisdiction to avoid bringing in even more areas for potential spending in the natural resources space. The House's shared jurisdiction makes this something they don't care about, but it's important for us to control the process.
- Would be nice to direct some funds to the purchase and operation of some firefighting equipment for the Western region, since Cannacorp will likely manufacture the tankers/scoopers and they will likely operate out of the Laramie regional U.S. Forest Service compound. This would be a great press release for the Senator if we can get it in.

House Amendments

The Senator strongly supports all three House amendments, as they make the bill more helpful to businesses in Laramie. Also, is possible it would be good to show some wins to NTPA, since Jacobs has been so out front on their issues – keeping these amendments in is a good way to do that.

- **Amendment 1:** Strong first step to increasing access to these forests for potential timber interests, clearing the way for logging in these forests. Remote communities are cut off from critical infrastructure and resources—this amendment will reduce those barriers and help the rural populations in Laramie.
- **Amendment 2:** Reduces redundant job-killing regulation – Jacobs strongly supports this amendment and we want to fight to keep it in.
- **Amendment 3:** I didn't follow some of the research you sent, but agree that this function makes more sense in the private sector, while diverting funds to more pressing efforts that would help economic stability in the region. This amendment is not as high a priority, but we would prefer to have it in rather than out.

You know this, but reiterating that we want to keep all references to global warming and climate out of this bill.

One last note – Senator Jacobs asked why we didn't end up including more forest thinning in the Senate bill? He talked to someone last week (no idea who... tracking that down) who mentioned that it's a much cheaper option than some of the programs that the Danvers' staff pushed into the final bill. Something to think about.

Good luck! I'll be back in the state with the Senator next week while you're negotiating, but feel free to call whenever.

Jon

Jon Stivers, Minority Staff Director
Senate Agriculture Committee, Office of Senator Jordan Jacobs

To: You (Jacobs' Office, Senate Ag)

From: lisa.wilson@ntpa.org (National Timber and Pulp Association)

Date: May 23rd

Subject: Follow up from meeting

Hi there,

Thanks again for a great meeting last week. Wanted to give you a few points on the WPRA before you head into negotiations. As always, please reach out if we can be a resource during the talks. Your boss has been a great ally.

- **Amendment 1:** This amendment is essential for us – top priority. It will allow for logging in these forests, which will be a real economic boon to Laramie. Think more jobs, more money in local pockets and generally improved local economies, especially in smaller towns.
- **Amendment 2:** As we discussed, this is great but not essential for our members' immediate operations. Would love to keep in if we can because it will help speed up approvals by removing unnecessary red tape.
- **Amendment 3:** We feel strongly about keeping this amendment in. Don't need to explain this to you given your background, but funding should invest more directly in the communities that best know what they need – as opposed to government mandates. Supporting local infrastructure that supports private sector companies involved in timber production would increase outcomes (and bring jobs!). Let me know if you need additional data/research that outlines this point.

Thanks again – the Senator has been a real partner in trying to claw back some of this excessive regulation. We are really counting on you guys to deliver! Would be huge for Laramie if we could get some more logging operations going.

Thanks! And hopefully see you soon.

Lisa

Lisa Wilson
Director, Federal Affairs
National Timber and Pulp Association