



News Release

1300 L Street NW · Suite 910 · Washington, DC 20005
(202) 682-9456 · fax (202) 682-0333 · www.nationalpotatocouncil.org

MEDIA INQUIRIES:

Steve Holton
(202) 682-9456
steveh@nationalpotatocouncil.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 22, 2015

The Magnificent Seven: NPC Past Presidents Honored for WIC Accomplishment

By John Keeling, NPC Vice President and CEO

At the National Potato Council (NPC) Annual Meeting on January 9, 2015, in Orlando, Florida, seven NPC past presidents were invited to come on stage to be recognized for their involvement in adding fresh white potatoes to the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program. Each past president received a framed copy of WIC educational material that was hand-delivered to Members of Congress. The battle was fought long and hard with victory within arms-length throughout that seven-year course, but at the end of the day it remained an uphill battle until the bitter end.



Photo of potatoes displaying WIC sign was taken at a local grocery store in the San Luis Valley of Colorado.

Picture a grocery store clerk telling a WIC mother that she cannot use the vouchers provided by USDA to purchase fresh white potatoes but ANY other fruit or vegetable in the grocery store is acceptable. Think of the message that sends about the nutrition of a potato. Although she could buy the same potato with a voucher at a farmer's market, until Congress acted last year, grocery store potatoes were off limits.

WIC, a program designed to increase the intake of key nutrients for a population with special nutritional needs, expanded in 2009 to allow participants to use WIC vouchers to purchase all fresh fruits and vegetables, with the singular exception of fresh white potatoes. For the past several years, NPC has worked to include fresh white potatoes for purchase in the WIC program on the basis of nutritional science. On December 16, 2014, the tireless efforts of NPC grower leaders and the entire potato industry paid off when

President Obama signed the 2015 Appropriations Act into law with directions from Congress to include potatoes in the WIC program.

The mandated change in public policy was facilitated by NPC presidents during those seven years, who did their part in educating members of Congress on the nutritional value of potatoes for all consumers but particularly for the special needs of WIC participants. Members of Congress took a bi-partisan look and acknowledged the importance of WIC mothers having the ability to use vouchers and buy an affordable bag of potatoes that are nutritious and an important source of potassium and fiber, which are identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as “nutrients of concern”.

The potato community is appreciative of the leadership shown by Congress to pass this bill and return common sense to the WIC program by recognizing the nutritional value of fresh white potatoes. The framed graphic held by the past presidents below depicts two identical sacks of potatoes. One of which is WIC approved for purchase of fresh potatoes in a farmers market with a WIC voucher and the other being ineligible for purchase in grocery stores using a WIC voucher. The pair of visuals created confusion and prompted the question amongst its viewers, “What’s the difference?”



Honored NPC Past Presidents from left to right: Randy Hardy, 2014, Randy Mullen, 2013, Don Sklarczyk, 2007, Ed Schneider, 2009, Roger Mix, 2010, Justin Dagen, 2011, and Steve Crane, 2012.

“As a potato industry we knew we were doing the right thing from a scientific, nutritional, and economic standpoint. We knew what we were doing was best for the women and children of the U.S. and that's what kept us going through those challenging times,” said NPC 2011 Past President, Justin Dagen.

###

The National Potato Council is the advocate for the economic well-being of U.S. potato growers on federal legislative, regulatory, environmental, and trade issues. NPC supports the U.S. potato industry by monitoring issues affecting the strength and viability of the potato industry, influencing regulators and legislators on issues crucial to the industry's long term success, ensuring fair market access for potatoes and potato products, and bringing the unique issues and interests of diverse growing regions in the U.S. together on a national level.