

## *AgriTalk*

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Mike Adams with Senator Mike Johanns (R., Neb.)

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Note: This is an unofficial transcript of an *AgriTalk* interview.



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**Mike Adams:** Welcome back to AgriTalk. And joining us now is Nebraska Senator Mike Johanns, as we get an update on the Farm Bill debate in the Senate. Senator Johanns, as always, thank you for joining us. I guess, let's get right into it. Is the amendment debate threatening to derail the Farm Bill in the Senate?

**Sen Mike Johanns:** Well, Mike, you always ask me great, direct questions, and I try to give you direct answers. And the most direct answer I can give you is yes. Here's what I would tell you. There's a couple hundred amendments, but I don't find that shocking. It's a lengthy bill. It's a complicated bill. It's not surprising that, you know, with 100 senators, you know, that would be two amendments per senator.

But here's my concern is that we've now wasted about three days. Nothing is going on on the floor. We vote on, yesterday, on two handpicked amendments that Harry Reid wants us to vote on. Heck, my attitude is park us down on the floor, let's start voting, let's start debating these things. If we work around the clock, so be it. But let's get this thing done. What I worry about is we're going to get to a point, Mike, where senators are going to say, "Look, I can't support moving a bill forward that I can't get a vote on my amendment."

You know, the Southern guys are concerned about some things. And I could go on and on. But, you know, this thing had 90 votes to proceed. It's amazing that you could mess that up. And I'm worried that we're on the edge of a situation where, if amendments aren't voted on, we're not going to get across the finish line.

**Mike Adams:** Are some of the amendments being offered though really not germane to the Farm Bill? Are we getting, hearing -- we're hearing about, you know, amendments that have to do with some, while important, but other topics rather than the Farm Bill.

**Sen Mike Johanns:** Yeah. The only thing I would say about that, Mike, is that that is the way of the Senate. We do not have to put a germane amendment out there. And I'll give you a perfect example. I carried the 1099 legislation to get that repealed out of the healthcare bill. I had to get, I think when we were all, when it was all said and done, I had to get the Senate to vote seven different times on that to get that done. I was putting an amendment on any bill that was moving. Why? Because I needed to get it done. I had farmers and ranchers and businesses telling me, "Man, this is going to be a meltdown if we have to comply with that."

So I know that people sometimes look at this and say, "Well, that's not right." Heck, we can dispose of those amendments if we would just go down to the floor. You can dispose an amendment if you stay with it every ten, 15 minutes. So there isn't any reason why we can't get through a lot of amendments. I'm not saying we have to vote on 200. But I am saying that we could vote on a big package of amendments and move this bill.

**Mike Adams:** What do you think is going to happen with United Egg Producers, HSUS Bill on setting federal standards for egg-laying hens? Is that going to make it?

**Sen Mike Johanns:** You know, I was Secretary of Agriculture when horse slaughter came up. And I opposed, you know, in effect, banning horse slaughter. And I kept telling the people at USDA there's no way this can pass. And it passed. We've gotten that corrected recently, but, having said that, it passed.

So I just never want to tell anybody, you know, "Don't take this seriously." I think you've got to take these things seriously. You know, there's just such a big connection between animal agriculture especially and the consumer that these things have a tendency to get legs and all of a sudden they pass and you're stuck with them. But I want to say it's going to go anywhere, but I still worry about these things, and I don't take anything for granted.

**Mike Adams:** What about caps on crop insurance?

**Sen Mike Johanns:** You know, that's going to take 60 votes. If that were to come up and be voted on, it takes 60 votes. And I just don't see the 60 votes there. And I believe crop insurance is a very different creature than what we were doing with direct payments and counter-cyclical and loan deficiency payments. So I don't think it would ever get 60 votes. I really just don't believe that there's the numbers there to pass that.

**Mike Adams:** We're talking with Nebraska Senator Mike Johanns about the Farm Bill debate going on in the Senate. Of course, one of his battles has been with EPA over aerial surveillance. And when we come back after the break, we're going to get his thoughts on that battle, and what he has offered to try to stop EPA from conducting that surveillance. And what about his reaction to the response so far from EPA on why they're doing it and why they think they should be able to do it. We'll talk more about that when we come back. And then later in the program, remember, we're going to talk with a California farmer about the issue and the State of California. The ballot question that's going to be raised and posed to voters in November in that state about labeling foods with genetically engineered ingredients. We'll get his thoughts on that

a little bit later on in the program. But back with more on the Farm Bill with Senator Johanns. Stay with us. This is AgriTalk.

[Break]

**Mike Adams:** Welcome back to AgriTalk with Nebraska Senator Mike Johanns. All right, Senator, kind of bring us up to date on your battle with EPA over aerial surveillance.

**Sen Mike Johanns:** Well, I found out accidentally a little while back that EPA was doing aerial surveillance in Nebraska, and I think they also are doing it in Iowa. They use that surveillance to try to spot or spy on people to see if they think they're complying with clean water rules or whatever else. And then they go down on the ground and they can start an enforcement process that can lead to fines and even shutting somebody down. Didn't warn me. Didn't warn anybody.

So the entire Nebraska delegation wrote them a letter, wrote Lisa Jackson, the administrator, and said, "We've got a series of questions. Please answer this. Provide us information on the program." Well, she doesn't answer it. She kicks it down to Region 7. And the director for the Region 7 gives us an answer, which of course is not really an answer at all because he can't speak to what they're doing nationally.

So typical EPA, you know. They're just -- they want to be undercover. They don't want to be open with what they're doing or transparent. And now they won't give us answers. So I filed an amendment that said it has to stop. And it's a trust issue. It's not that area photographing isn't going on. Heck, the USDA, you can get your farm photographed if you want. But it's just the way these people work, and then they don't want to give you information. So I've got an amendment in that basically would say you've got to stop.

**Mike Adams:** It seems like there is a focus in this process to kind of reign in EPA and Department of Labor and other agencies from overstepping their bounds. Is that a part of this debate? And how far do you see it -- is Senator Reid going to allow this to move forward?

**Sen Mike Johanns:** Well, he's not allowing much anything to move forward. I hope he does. Here's why I think he would be concerned by my amendment. I think he's concerned it would pass. I think he's concerned it'd get a lot of votes. And it should pass because the EPA will not work with us. And they are heavy-handed. And they are absolutely indifferent to Congressional oversight. They are just impossible to deal with.

So Democrats are as frustrated as Republicans. The bipartisan frustration toward this federal agency is, it's universal. And it's justified. And until we can send them a message that enough is enough, they're just going to do whatever they want to do.

**Mike Adams:** So what's your predication? Are you going to get a bill out of the Senate in the next week or two?

**Sen Mike Johanns:** Mike, here's what I'd say: if you and your listener start to see us voting on a whole host of amendments then I'm optimistic we will get a bill. If this thing continues to be bottlenecked by Senator Reid and, you know, we vote on two today and two on Monday, then I think at some point he'll blame it on somebody and pull the bill. And we won't get the bill to the finish line, which would be unfortunate because, again, it got 90 votes on the Motion to Proceed. That's a lot of votes in the Senate. Nine out of ten senators voted for this thing. We can get it done, but he's got to let amendments be voted on.

**Mike Adams:** What's on the schedule today?

**Sen Mike Johanns:** Well, he hasn't even scheduled votes yet. He's got two pending that he could bring up, and I don't know if he will or not. You know, we've been voting on two amendments a day. It is so frustrating. We should be down there voting non-stop until we get this done. And like I said, if we have to work around the clock, so be it. Let's do it. We can get that, get this bill to the finish line, but we've got to address amendments.

**Mike Adams:** All right, Senator. We will stay in touch. Thank you very much.

**Sen Mike Johanns:** Thank you Mike.

**Mike Adams:** Nebraska Senator Mike Johanns with the latest on the now stalled, it would seem, Farm Bill debate in the Senate.

*[End of interview]*