Happy New Year from Class V!
RLND kicked off the New Year with a seminar on January 9-11 on “Understanding North Dakota Ag and Rural Policies” in Bismarck, ND. We started the seminar off meeting at the North Dakota Department of Commerce. We heard from Al Anderson, ND Department of Commerce Commissioner; Paul Lucy, Economic Development & Finance Division Director; and Tracy Finneman, Senior Marketing & Development Manager. The summary of these great speakers is that North Dakota has many great things to offer, always had and always will. The Department of Commerce has been there to help guide and direct businesses as we continue to grow and develop new possibilities.

We next traveled to the Bank of North Dakota where we heard from President & CEO, Eric Hardmeyer, about how the bank functions as a role to North Dakotans and what it’s purpose is. The Bank of North Dakota is the only state bank in the nation and while many states are looking to duplicate this model, we are far ahead of any state by having this financial resource. The Marketing & Information Director for North Dakota Department of Agriculture, Katie Pinke, gave us an eye opening presentation on “Getting your Message out through Social Media”. It is better to be proactive in getting your message out and telling your story for agriculture than to be reactive. If you don’t, someone else may be telling your story for you and it may not be the story you want told.

We concluded our night with a trip to the Black Leg Ranch hosted by Jerry, Jeremy and Jay Doan. We were treated to a great BBQ meal, some socializing and a North Dakotan version of “I am a farmer and I know it.”

Thursday we starting with a briefing from Connie Spryńczynatyk, Executive Director for North Dakota League of Cities on “Getting Involved in the Political Process.” We did some role playing on how a bill is deliberated over in a committee hearing and we learned that all bills in North Dakota must be heard by a committee, which is not true in every state. Armed with this information from Connie we went to the Capitol. For the rest of the morning we went on capitol tours, met with our legislators and sat in on committee hearings. Lieutenant Governor Drew Wrigley met with us after lunch and gave us a summary of some of the things that are taking shape for North Dakota right now. We listened to the Native American Address in the House Chambers. North Dakota Ag Commissioner Doug Goehring met with us to talk about some of the issues at hand today with agriculture and North Dakota. We finished our night off with a Legislative Social at the Kelly Inn for RLND Alumni, Class V participants and our Legislators, it was a great meet and greet!

Friday we headed to Northern Lights Dairy for a brisk tour by Kenton, Andrew and Jen Holle on their 600 cow dairy farm. We saw cows being milked, baby calves and lots of milk cows. We then traveled to Cloverdale Foods to learn how Cloverdale started and how it has been a pioneer in the Mandan community for many years.