Introducing “POLICY CORNER”
a commentary by Karl Glasener, Director of Science Policy for ASA, CSSA, and SSSA

This edition of *Crop Science* presents the first in a series of commentaries by Karl Glasener about the political nature of our work in plant, soil, and atmospheric sciences. The series is intended to provide ‘insider insight’ into the political realities of funding agricultural research and the impact we can have as scientist- and citizen-advocates for agriculture. The recently passed ‘economic stimulus’ bill was devoid of supplemental funding for agricultural research, while NSF and NIH received billions. By any account, this is a rather clear message that the value of our research discoveries has not caught the attention of Washington’s decision makers. In this era of escalating budget deficits and a new administration still charting its agricultural policies, we need to get their attention and work together with our Science Policy team in DC to keep it. POLICY CORNER, as the name implies, recognizes the importance of being politically astute and proactive in today’s competitive funding environment. Karl Gasener’s commentaries will provide many insights to help us become more politically astute. Hopefully, this will encourage more of our readership to become proactive as well.

— Mark E. Westgate, Editor

POLICY CORNER

By Karl Glasener

June 2009: Growing Pains for Crop Science Policy Efforts

Washington, DC is “a buzz” these days with various interest groups, including the Crop Science Society of America (CSSA), working to position themselves within the new Obama Administration. Whenever a change in administration occurs, particularly when the incoming one embraces a markedly different political philosophy as is the case with President Obama following President Bush, White House office and federal agency leadership, both political and Senior Executive Service, often experiences a massive upheaval and turnover. Consequently, a whole new group of leaders takes office. This in turn requires groups such as CSSA, in addition to making the obligatory get-to-know meetings, to pull together a long-term effort to educate both political appointees and, perhaps more importantly, new, lower-level staff (the folks we interact with frequently), about their issues. Adding to the challenge is the fact that historically many political appointments are not made in a timely fashion, with some taking a year or more. Therefore, many key leadership positions in White House offices and federal agencies are held by interim leaders who do not have the authority to make policy and spending decisions.