

FMMO September 25, 2015

The California FMMO hearing kicked off in front of an experienced administrative law judge on Tuesday with a room packed with USDA folks, media, producers, attorneys and economists. Attendance dropped faster than VW's reputation on Wednesday, with less than half of the crowd remaining. Still, just under 50 people were all ears to listen to the information presented for the rest of the week.

FMMO lingo and attorney questions at the hearing were trendier than a Taylor Swift album in a high school class. The daily order of things went as follows: USDA's witness #1 presented a technical testimony, followed by questions by attorneys present. USDA's witness #2 presented a technical testimony, followed by more questions. And so on... for four straight days. In total, 6 USDA witnesses took the stand to present information. It was quite impressive to see the amount of questions attorneys can come up with. The process was slow, but certainly enlightening to many attendees. FMMO discussions include many particular provisions that are different to California's, and attorneys present ensured the record would be clear on definitions. Opening statements were made Friday afternoon and the coops got to start their testimony.

In addition to the extensive testimony presented, Dana Coale, Deputy Administrator of the Agricultural Marketing Service Dairy Program, brought up the timely topic of government funding. In the event there is a lapse in funding, starting October 1, the hearing will have to be adjourned until further notice. She could not offer much more information, but did specify that the hearing would likely resume 2 business days after funding returns.

What's on the schedule for next week? We will get to hear the coops' representatives testify on why their proposal should be adopted. Your WUD's economist is also eager to testify in support of that proposal. Any producer interested in testifying can do so at any time, but Monday and Tuesday may present a good opportunity as the coops are making the case for why California needs a FMMO.

As a reminder, any interested party can listen to the live audio feed at: tinyurl.com/camilkhearing. Don't have time to sit through entire days of deliberations? "Like" Western United Dairymen on Facebook or follow us on twitter (@wudnews) for daily progress updates.