

Updated May 22, 2019

# Farm Credit Administration and its Board Members

## Overview

The Farm Credit Administration (FCA) is an independent agency that is the federal regulator responsible for examining and ensuring the safety and soundness of all Farm Credit System (FCS) institutions and the Federal Agricultural Mortgage Corporation (Farmer Mac).

FCA is directed by a three-member board of directors nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate (12 U.S.C. 2242). Congressional oversight is provided by the House and Senate Agriculture Committees, which have primary jurisdiction for the FCS statutes.

The most recent congressional hearings on the FCS were in the Senate on May 19, 2016, and in the House on March 29, 2017 (with FCA witnesses). The Senate Agriculture Committee most recently held a nomination hearing for a board member in November 2017.

## Farm Credit Administration

The FCA sets the policies, regulations, charters, and examinations of the FCS and Farmer Mac. This includes compliance with statutes to serve eligible borrowers. Violations may result in supervisory and enforcement actions. FCA also protects the rights of borrowers and reports to Congress on the financial condition of the FCS. FCA has about 300 full- and part-time employees. It is located in McLean, VA, and conducts examinations from field offices in Colorado, Texas, Minnesota, and California.

The current structure of the FCA and oversight of the FCS was created by the Farm Credit Amendments Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-205). Its statutory authority is in 12 U.S.C. 2241 *et seq.*, with regulations in 12 C.F.R. 600 *et seq.*

FCA's operating expenses are paid through assessments on FCS banks and associations. Even though FCA does not receive an appropriation from Congress, the annual Agriculture appropriations act places a limit on FCA's administrative expenses (\$74.6 million in FY2019).

## Farm Credit System

The FCS is a privately owned, federally chartered, nationwide financial cooperative that lends to full- and part-time farmers, farming-related businesses, rural homeowners, farmer-owned cooperatives, and certain rural utilities. Borrowers must meet creditworthiness requirements; FCS is not a lender of last resort.

Established in 1916 as a government-sponsored enterprise (GSE), FCS has a statutory mandate—and limitation—to serve agriculture. FCS is the only direct lender among the GSEs. It receives tax benefits, but FCS operates without any direct federal appropriations.

FCS associations are owned by their borrowers, who are required to purchase stock as part of their loans. FCS banks and associations do not take deposits like commercial banks. Instead, FCS uses capital markets to sell bonds that become the joint and several liabilities of all FCS banks, meaning they collectively stand behind the obligations to repay those bonds. FCS is composed of four regional banks that provide funds and support services to 69 smaller credit associations that in turn provide loans to eligible borrowers.

As of March 31, 2019, FCS had \$274 billion in total loans outstanding. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the FCS held 40% of the U.S. farm sector's total debt in 2017.

Statutory authority for FCS is in the Farm Credit Act of 1971 (12 U.S.C. 2001 *et seq.*), as amended notably by the Agricultural Credit Act of 1987. For more background, see CRS Report RS21278, *Farm Credit System*.

## Board Members

As a regulator, FCA is directed by a three-member board of directors nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate (12 U.S.C. 2242). **Table 1** shows the current FCA board members and their terms.

**Table 1. Farm Credit Administration Board Members**  
(as of May 22, 2019)

Name	Description	Expires
Jeffery S. Hall	Confirmed on March 9, 2015. Delegated Chief Executive Officer of FCA on May 21, 2019. Serving until a successor is confirmed.	10/13/2018
Vacant	Dallas P. Tonsager, chairman, died on May 21, 2019.	5/21/2020
Glen R. Smith	Confirmed on December 5, 2017.	5/21/2022

**Source:** CRS, using data at FCA.gov, "About FCA."

Terms for board members are six years in length, fixed when they begin and staggered so that one term begins every two years regardless of whether a new member has been appointed and confirmed. Board members may not be reappointed after serving a full term or more than three years of an unexpired term. A board member may continue to serve beyond the end of his/her term until a replacement has been confirmed; this helps maintain a full three-member board if successors are delayed. Not more than two members of the board may be from the same political party.

The President designates one member as chairman—not subject to further Senate confirmation if previously confirmed as a board member—who has historically served

until the end of that member's term. The chairman is also the Chief Executive Officer of the FCA (12 U.S.C. 2244). The three FCA board members also serve as the board of directors of the Farm Credit System Insurance Corporation, which was established to help to ensure timely payment of bonds.

### Current Board Members

The current FCA board has two members and one vacancy (**Table 1**). Jeffrey Hall was confirmed in 2015 for a term that expired on October 13, 2018. He continues to serve and was delegated chief executive office of the FCA upon the incapacity and death of the former chairman, Dallas Tonsager, who died on May 21, 2019. The newest board member, Glen Smith, was confirmed in 2017 for a term that expires on May 21, 2022. Both Mr. Hall and Mr. Smith are Republicans; Mr. Tonsager was a Democrat.

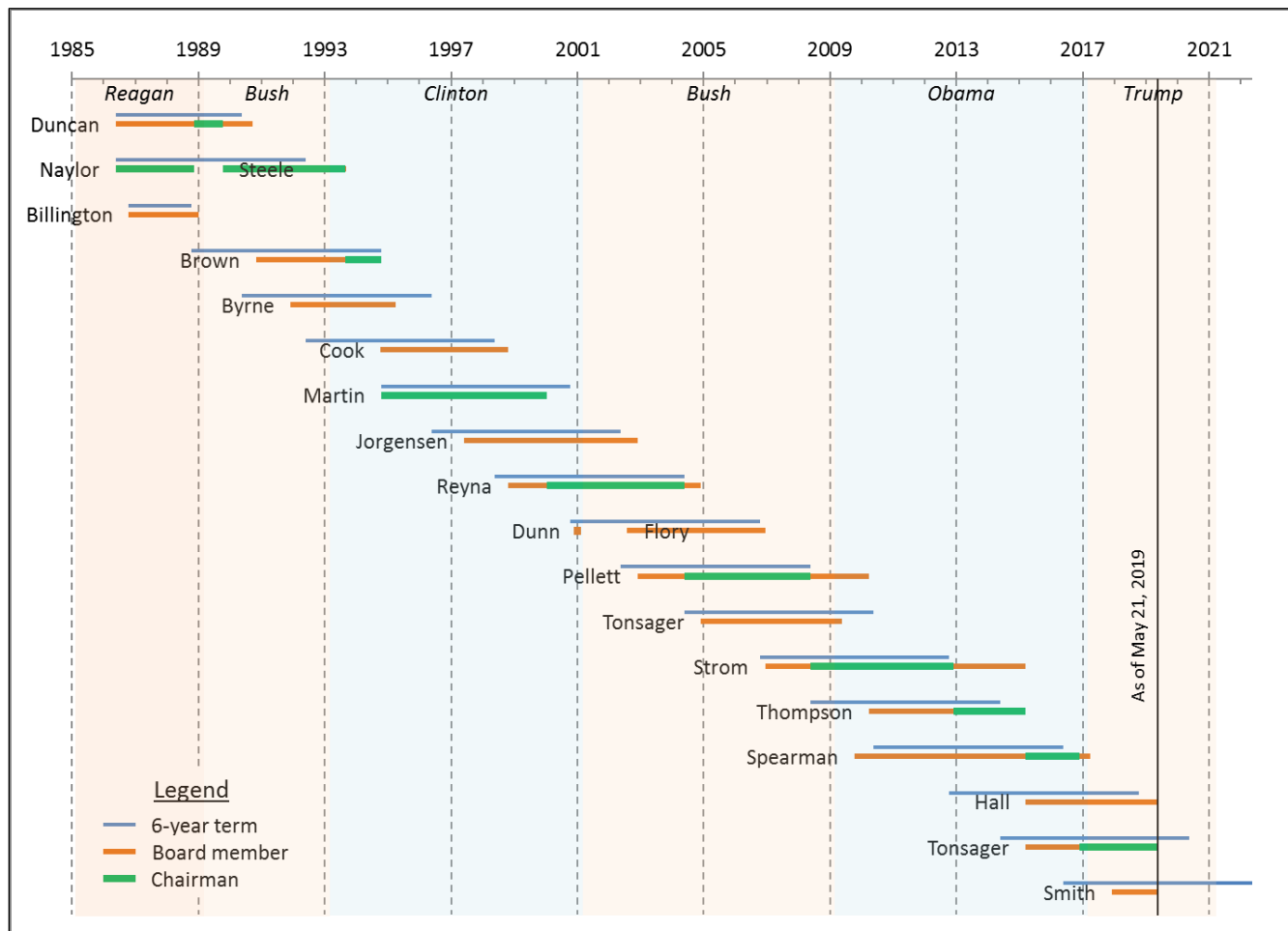
### History of Board Members

**Figure 1** is a timeline showing the service of the 20 FCA board members and 11 chairmen of the FCA over 33 years.

The timeline illustrates that the terms of board members are for six years with a fixed and staggered beginning so that one term begins every two years whether or not an individual fills the vacancy (blue line). A board member's service date depends on presidential appointment and Senate confirmation and may extend beyond the end of a term until a successor is in place (orange line). Service as chairman depends on presidential appointment and is not subject to further Senate confirmation (green line on top of orange line).

From August 2002 until March 2017, the FCA board maintained a full board with three active members, particularly since board members have continued to serve until their successors are confirmed. From March to December 2017, one position was vacant following the death of Mr. Spearman. Beginning on May 22, 2019, one board member position became vacant upon the death of Mr. Tonsager.

**Figure 1. Farm Credit Administration Board Members and Chairmen**



**Source:** CRS, using data at FCA.gov, "About FCA."

**Notes:** Terms (in blue) for board members are six years with a fixed and staggered beginning so that one term begins every two years whether or not an individual fills the vacancy. Service as a board member (in orange) depends on appointment and confirmation and may extend beyond the end of a term until a successor is in place. Appointments as chairman (in green) are named by the President.

**Jim Monke**, Specialist in Agricultural Policy

IF10767

---

## Disclaimer

This document was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). CRS serves as nonpartisan shared staff to congressional committees and Members of Congress. It operates solely at the behest of and under the direction of Congress. Information in a CRS Report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to Members of Congress in connection with CRS's institutional role. CRS Reports, as a work of the United States Government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS Report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS Report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain the permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.