

Secretary of Agriculture Sworn In

Ed Schafer was sworn in as the 29th Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Jan. 28. Secretary Schafer brings to USDA a record as an innovative two-term governor of North Dakota along with extensive private-sector experience as both an entrepreneur and a business executive.

Schafer served as North Dakota's governor from 1992 to 2000, expanding North Dakota's economy, reducing the cost of government and advancing agriculture as his top priorities in office.

He worked to normalize trading relations with China and to develop that nation as an export market for North Dakota farm products. He also led efforts to upgrade North Dakota's communications infrastructure and make high-speed voice and data networks available to farmers, ranchers and rural businesses.

To expand the state's job base, he encouraged the growth of value-added agricultural industries such as pasta and corn sweetener manufacturing.

As governor, Schafer managed a state workforce of 12,000 people, oversaw a budget of \$4.6 billion and led the state's response to emergencies, such as the severe floods that hit the Grand Forks area in 1997.

As chair of the Western Governors Association, Schafer led regional efforts to demonstrate how technology could improve the efficiency and lower the cost of delivering government services such as health benefits and food stamps. He also worked to make telemedicine more available and affordable in rural areas.

Schafer was elected chair of the Republican Governors Association in 2000. That same year he co-founded and co-chaired the Governors Biotechnology Partnership to increase public understanding and support for the benefits of agricultural biotechnology.

He has had a lifelong interest in conservation and helped arrange the U.S. Forest Service's May 2007 purchase of the 5,200-acre Elkhorn Ranch in North Dakota. The site was where Theodore Roosevelt had his home and operated a cattle ranch in the 1880s. It is near the preserved town of Medora — the state's leading tourist attraction.

Born and raised in Bismarck, N.D., Schafer graduated from the University of North Dakota in 1969 with a bachelor's degree in business administration. He earned an MBA from the University of Denver in 1970.

Secretary Schafer's grandfather immigrated to North Dakota from Denmark and homesteaded land in Hettinger County that he turned into a wheat and livestock farm. Schafer spent summers there while growing up. He helped his uncles with chores, tinkered with engines and learned firsthand about agriculture.

Before entering public life, Schafer was an executive with the Gold Seal Co. in Bismarck, a successful marketer of nationally known consumer products

such as "Mr. Bubble" bubble bath, "Glass Wax" glass cleaner and "Snowy Bleach." His father, Harold Schafer, had founded the company.

Secretary Schafer joined Gold Seal after he earned his MBA and held a series of management positions with the company.

He was named president in 1978. Under his leadership, Gold Seal's sales climbed to \$50 million through acquisitions and new product introductions, and its net worth tripled. It was sold in 1986. Schafer then went on to launch several new businesses, including a commercial real estate

development company, a fish farm and a classic car dealership.

After leaving office in 2000, he co-founded Extend America, a venture-capital-backed company, to provide wireless voice and high-speed data services to commercial and residential customers in five rural Midwestern states.



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