WEBINAR: Opportunities in the 2018 Farm Bill: Federal Efforts to Advance Equitable and Sustainable Food Systems
Tuesday, January 9, 2017

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

John Weidman (Moderator)
Deputy Executive Director, The Food Trust
John oversees the organizational development and strategy across a variety of programs at The Food Trust as well as policy advocacy. He holds a master's degree in political science from the University of Pennsylvania. John has worked at The Food Trust for 14 years.

Abby Bownas
Senior Advisor, NVG
Abby Bownas is a big thinker whose health background helps her deliver results on a range of “cradle-through-college-and-career” issues that ensure more people can lead happier, healthier lives. Prior to her career at NVG, Abby served as the Director of Federal Government Affairs at the American Diabetes Association, where she played a key role in the Association’s efforts to increase funding for diabetes research and prevention programs, expand the federal commitment to stem cell research, ensure that all Americans with diabetes have access to affordable and adequate health coverage and protect people with diabetes from discrimination. Abby helped lead the Association to victory on passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act, working closely with a bipartisan coalition of disability, health, civil rights, religious, and business groups to restore the Americans with Disabilities Act to its rightful intent. Earlier in her career, Abby spent over five years on Capitol Hill, in both the Senate and House of Representatives. After working for Senator Bob Kerrey (D-NE) and Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), she moved to the office of Rep. John F. Tierney (D-MA). Abby earned a Master’s degree in Political Science in 2002 and a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Interdisciplinary Studies in 2000, both from the American University in Washington, DC.

Lisa Cylar Barrett
Director of Federal Policy & Co-Director of the Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink
Lisa Cylar Barrett is the Director of Federal Policy at PolicyLink where she collaborates with other PolicyLink staff to develop and execute federal policy and advocacy strategies to advance economic and social equity. With over 20 years of combined experience in the Legal, Philanthropic and Nonprofit Sectors, Ms. Barrett works tirelessly to effectively execute multi-pronged strategies to secure justice for and improve the lives of everyday Americans, especially those in low-income communities and communities of color. Lisa also serves as the Co-Director of Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink (PNI), where she leads and manages PNI’s policy efforts to sustain and advance Promise Neighborhoods including leading the successful effort to have Promise Neighborhoods included in the recent
reauthorization of ESEA, thus rendering Promise Neighborhoods a federally authorized program. Additionally, Lisa manages PNI’s relationships with other stakeholder organizations, and its day-to-day operations. A lawyer by training, Lisa practiced law prior to beginning her career in the philanthropic and nonprofit sectors. She holds a BA in English from Spelman College and a JD from Case Western Reserve University School of Law.

Ellen Vollinger  
**Legal Director, Food Research & Action Center**

Ellen Vollinger is legal director for FRAC. She has responsibility for directing FRAC’s advocacy on behalf of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/Food Stamps). Ellen has led FRAC’s efforts to bolster SNAP/Food Stamps, particularly to serve working families, legal immigrants and victims of disasters. She has worked with administrators, elected officials, industry representatives, and nonprofit partners on strategies to provide a more accessible and effective nutrition assistance safety net. She serves on the eGovernment Payments Council. Her prior positions include serving as director of the nonprofit National Committee for Full Employment as well as a practicing attorney with the Washington, DC law firm of Ross, Dixon and Masback. Ellen has a B.A. in American Studies from Smith College, master’s degree in Legislative Affairs from The George Washington University, and a J.D. magna cum laude from the American University’s Washington College of Law.

Brent Ling  
**Policy Consultant, Fair Food Network**

Brent Ling pursues improved public health as an independent policy consultant in Washington, DC. A passionate advocate for health in all policy, and an experienced entrepreneur, Brent seeks budding, high-upside opportunities to make a pragmatic and meaningful difference. He recently completed the Master of Public Health Policy program at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and less recently, a BS at Indiana University.

Wes King  
**Policy Specialist, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition**

Wes has worked on sustainability and food policy issues for nearly ten years. He staffs NSAC’s Marketing, Food Systems and Rural Development Committee. Before joining NSAC, Wes spent the previous six years at NSAC member organization, Illinois Stewardship Alliance, working on food access, farmers markets and working-lands conservation policy; and leading efforts to create a more risk and scale appropriate regulatory environment for farms and local food businesses. Prior to that he worked for the Illinois Environmental Council. Wes holds an M.A. and B.A. in Political Science from the University of Illinois.