Plain Talk

By Elwood Kirkpatrick
President

MMPAC Needs Member Support

This year the agriculture community rallied together to educate Michigan lawmakers about today's farming practices and the impact environmental regulations have on individual farmers and the state's economy. Although our work in this area is far from over, we learned that a majority of our state lawmakers are unaware of the impact agriculture has on the state's economy and likewise the impact the laws they are passing have on the agriculture economy. It is clearly evident that we all need to make a concerted effort to work with lawmakers to educate them about our farming practices. We have always worked in this area, but it is definitely time to step up our efforts as major concerns like air quality and other environmental issues are brought forward for consideration.

Term limits contribute to the ongoing challenge of making legislators aware of our interests. While term limits create more opportunities for new people to enter public service, we lose continuity as leadership and committee chairs revolve about every four years. This turnover requires a great deal of education and relationship building between the agriculture community and the new lawmakers who may not understand the needs of Michigan's farmers.

One way that MMPA members can become involved in the political process is by participating in the Michigan Milk Political Action Committee (MMPAC). The MMPAC was formed in 1978 as a way for MMPA members to voluntarily participate in the election of state and federal candidates to public offices. The MMPAC allows candidates to identify with our organization and interests. This year, nearly 30 years later, MMPA delegates reaffirmed their support of the MMPAC by approving the following resolution at the 2006 State Annual Meeting:

Term limits contribute to the ongoing challenge of making legislators aware of our interests.

We reaffirm our belief in the need to actively support the Michigan Milk Political Action Committee (MMPAC) as a legitimate means for organized involvement in areas of government legislation and regulation that affect dairy farmers and agriculture. To ensure that the dairy industry's needs are addressed in state and national lawmaking and policy-making circles, we strongly recommend a voluntary milk check deduction by each member at the rate of $5 per member per month.

This year's General Election will have a tremendous impact on our state government. In addition to filling the office of Governor, this year's General Election will decide who will represent us in all 110 Michigan House seats, 38 Senate seats, all 15 U.S. House seats and one U.S. Senate seat. Out of the 110 House seats, 23 of the House members are term limited out and 6 of the 38 Senate seats are termed out this year.

The MMPAC endorses state and federal political candidates who demonstrate a willingness to work on behalf of dairy and agricultural efforts. Out of the 91 MMPAC endorsed candidates in the 2004 General Election, ninety-two percent of them were elected to public office. Not all candidates receive financial support from the MMPAC; however, several candidates receive contributions from the MMPAC to assist them in their campaign efforts.

Following this year's August primary election, MMPA members will receive an MMPAC contribution card and a candidate endorsement recommendation form. I encourage you to become involved in the MMPAC by not only making a contribution to the MMPAC, but also by providing input in the endorsement process. As we see the impact of term limits, your input and involvement with the MMPAC is greatly needed. If you have questions about the MMPAC please contact Sheila Burkhardt or me at the Novi office.

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