



Legislative Watch

Issues important to today's dairy farmers

MMPA Members Open their Farms to Lawmakers

Giving Michigan lawmakers a first-hand look at today's farming enterprises gives them an opportunity to see how management practices evolve to address new challenges on the farm. On August 27, two MMPA members opened their farm operations to Michigan legislators and their representatives. The day-long event, organized by Michigan Farm Bureau, gave the visitors a chance to see dairy operations in action and to talk with the owners about the ways they are working to meet challenges, particularly in environmental areas.

"With 32 new House members, it is important that we take an active and ongoing role to educate members of the legislature about agriculture's contributions to the state," says Matt Smego, Michigan Farm Bureau Associate Legislative Counsel. "This tour has allowed legislators to see first-hand the positive efforts that the agriculture industry has made to protect the environment and grow our economy."

John and Karen Weller, of Middleton, have recently expanded their dairy operation and in the process implemented new manure management practices. The Wellers described to the Representatives how they frequently test their soils and track any impacts they may have on their soil from manure hauling. They stressed how proper record keeping and accountability eliminates the need for purchased fertilizers. They also outlined the solid separator system they installed as part of their manure management system.



Larry Nobis answers questions from Susan Schmidt, a staff member from Representative Mark Meadow's office, while she was at their farm.

While on the farm, questions regarding the basic handling and care of the animals were also addressed. For some of the participants, this was their first time on a working dairy farm even though they are involved in drafting rules and regulations that affect the farm.

In addition to the information and tour, the Wellers also provided lunch to the legislators. Following lunch, the group traveled to St. Johns to the Nobis Farm. While there, Larry Nobis outlined the steps they have taken to eliminate runoff from drain tiles. He explained how the issue arose and the attempts they made at correcting the situation. He also demonstrated a new piece of



MMPA President Ken Nobis visits with Representative Jeff Mayes, Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, during the tour.



John Weller describes his farming operation to the legislators and staff members.

equipment designed to prevent the tile runoff.

During the event the lawmakers had the chance to meet with various agriculture industry representatives.

Temporary Delay in Immigration Enforcement Measures

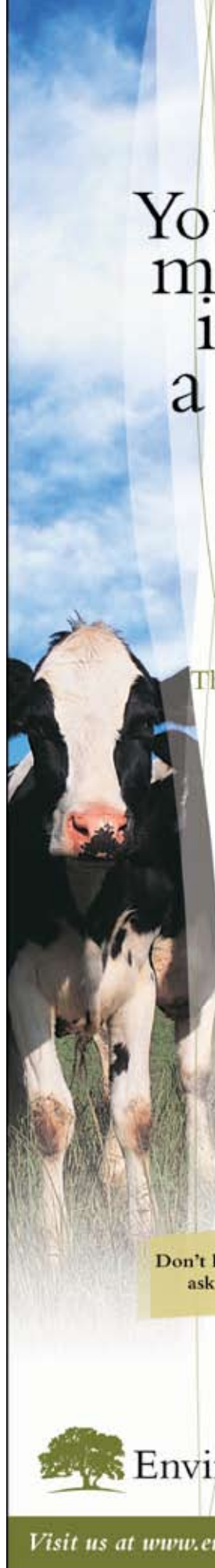
On August 31, a federal judge in San Francisco issued an order temporarily blocking the government from implementing the new Department of Homeland Security (DHS) "Social Security no match" rule that could cause thousands of employers across the country to terminate millions of experienced and productive workers. The judge's order also stops the Social Security Administration (SSA) from beginning to send notices in Mid-September to approximately 140,000 employers across the country notifying them of the new rule, which would impact approximately eight million workers.

In practical terms, this ruling provides employers with some additional time to make sure that they are ready to comply if or, more likely, when the no-match rule does become effective. The order came as a result of a lawsuit filed by the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Immigration Law Center (NILC) and various local labor groups. A hearing on the groups' request to permanently bar the implementation of the DHS rule was scheduled for October 1.

The court's ruling indicates only that the court wanted to take a closer look at the legal arguments than time allowed. It does not necessarily mean that DHS's no-match rule is invalid nor that the rule will necessarily be deemed to be invalid in whole or in part. It is very possible that, after more complete consideration, the court will uphold the rule in its entirety. In short, the situation is very fluid and it is difficult to predict the outcome at this point in time.

Despite this temporary stay in the government's immigration enforcement efforts, NMPF's longstanding fight for reasonable reform of agricultural immigration laws continues. NMPF has long championed the AgJOBS legislation, which would provide a rational and legal path forward on this difficult issue of immense importance to so many dairy producers. In addition to continuing its active coordination with the Agricultural Coalition for Immigration Reform's efforts, NMPF is focusing on what more the dairy industry can do to lead on this essential issue. In September, NMPF brought a large number of Young Cooperators to DC to lobby Congress on the need for AgJOBS, as well as on other topics of high interest such as the Farm Bill. In addition, an NMPF Officers call was held recently to discuss how to more visibly address this pressing issue.

In order to support these efforts and maximize the prospects for successful passage of AgJOBS, producers should contact their Members of Congress to urge swift enactment of this legislation. The Dairy GREAT Web site at <http://capwiz.com/nmpf/home/> allows dairy producers to let their elected officials hear their opinions on the immigration issue, which is especially important now that Congress is back in session.



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