



## Promotion: Why Bother?

Are you tired of columns about p-words, like politics and PACs? Sorry, but I have just one more to write about: promotion. Hang with me, though. What I have to say is short, will cost you no more than you are currently spending, and will require only the time it takes to complete and mail a simple ballot.

On October 19, 2007 the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) will be mailing ballots to all Michigan Grade A permit holders. The purpose is to conduct a referendum on the Michigan dairy check-off program. The program operates under Public Act 232, a Michigan law that requires the referendum process to be conducted every five years. Producers will have from October 22 until November 2 to return their ballots.

So why bother taking the time to mark and return your ballot? After all, Federal law requires that you will have 15 cents per hundredweight deducted for promotion, whether or not the referendum

passes. The question is, "How will my 15 cents be spent?"

The Dairy and Tobacco Adjustment Act of 1983, which mandates the 15 cent checkoff, allows for 10 of the 15 cents to stay in Michigan. If we pass the referendum, the Michigan dairy industry can keep the funds necessary to continue to support education programs and advertising in our own geographic area and in other areas that benefit our producers. If the referendum fails, the Michigan dairy industry loses control of how and where that entire 15 cents is invested. This is one very big reason why we should all take the time to vote "yes" and return those ballots.

Michigan Public Act 232 provides for a board made up of members appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Michigan State Senate. The positions are apportioned based on membership in milk marketing co-ops or other entities. The Governor must select the members of the board from names provided by marketing organizations. This board, the Michigan Dairy Market Program Committee (MDMPC), has final approval on the distribution of all program funds. This is a big responsibility. For example, seven billion pounds of Michigan Grade A milk at ten cents per hundredweight means the Committee is responsible for \$7,000,000.

The procedure followed in Michigan is for the United Dairy Industry of Michigan (UDIM) to

submit a detailed budget to MDMPC for the programs that UDIM determines are most valuable to the Michigan dairy industry. The MDMPC members then offer their opinions, after which they decide whether or not to fund the programs submitted by UDIM.

UDIM has a long history of sound management and excellent vision when it comes to dairy promotion and education. UDIM works closely with the national program, Dairy Management, Inc. (DMI), and has very capable, effective leadership. Programs initiated by UDIM in Michigan have broad appeal in the national program and lead the way in building partnerships with individual consumers and associations that influence the attitudes of people and what they consume. Among these groups are dietetic and dental associations as well as state agencies that oversee school lunch programs.

Like many components of the Michigan dairy industry, UDIM operates a premium program that deserves our support to ensure it continues. Although it is not something we think about on a day-to-day basis, effective dairy programs and promotion form a cornerstone of our business.

I can't recommend that you vote early and vote often, but I will recommend that you take the opportunity to vote early, vote once and vote "yes."

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken".

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