



Legislative Watch

Issues important to today's dairy farmers

Building Relationships and Making a Difference

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2008 MMPA OYDC

We left Michigan with thunder rolling behind us, and a much needed rain soaking our crops and refreshing our forages for second cutting. Arriving in D.C., we were slightly shocked by the muggy heat of 85 degrees; and when we had to walk three long blocks with our luggage in tow, we appreciated, in part, the cool summer we've had so far in Michigan.

We traveled to Washington D.C. to reacquaint with friends we made last October, and to build new relationships with our elected officials.

A follow up to our trip to the National Milk Producers Federation Annual Meeting last fall, NMPF organized a leadership development opportunity for Young Cooperators focused on helping us become politically active at the national level. Upon our arrival in D.C., it was apparent that some things had changed in the national political landscape, while some things have not.

We're still talking about immigration/labor issues, climate change, and the Clean Water Act. We are also talking about the importance of the national Farm Bill programs for the dairy industry in the current economic climate. We don't need to tell MMPA members that things have tightened

up, and many farms are really struggling financially with the current imbalance in milk prices and feed costs.

It was apparent that changes in the political make-up are influencing the issues important to the dairy industry. Climate change legislation once looked much more favorable for the industry, and in its current form it could leave farmers bearing the burden of caps on carbon emissions without the opportunity to capitalize on the offsets agriculture can bring to the table. There are proposals advancing that could significantly expand the scope of EPA's jurisdictions over places where water flows and might flow. Immigration issues are as conflicted as they have ever been, and one wonders if we will ever find the consensus to advance immigration reform.

To prepare us and update us on these issues and NMPF's position on legislative initiatives, we spent time hearing from the National Milk staff. On the first night, NMPF President and CEO Jerry Kozak and five other key staff members fielded questions of the YCs. It was a great opportunity to ask questions and gather information that is of present concern to those in the dairy industry.

On the following day, the NMPF staff did a great job of briefing us on the issues and preparing us with some political intelligence for our visits to Capitol



Hill. We were also prepped with a little lobbying 101. Our visits to the Hill included conversations with key staffers in Representative Mike Rogers' office and in the offices of Senators Debbie Stabenow and Carl Levin. Our visits were well received, but it was clear to us that we will need to remain steadfast in our relationship building with all of these offices in order to clearly convey the needs of the dairy industry. Seeing the number of people who come in and out of our elected officials offices, it becomes evident that one visit, one phone call, one letter will not be enough.

While in D.C. we also had the opportunity to sit in on the NMPF board meeting and listen to discussions regarding how the leadership of our industry proposes to collectively and thoroughly take a look at the supply and demand imbalance that exists in the dairy industry. We were pleased to hear that NMPF has put together a strategic task force to gather information on proposals that

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MMPA President Ken Nobis Testifies Before House Ag Committee on Climate Change Bill

Michigan Milk Producers Association President and NMPF Treasurer Ken Nobis appeared on Capitol Hill June 10 to offer testimony to the House Agriculture Committee as it considered agriculture's views on the H.R. 2454 American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009 (ACES).

The bill, introduced by Representatives Waxman and Markey, would establish a cap-and-trade system. NMPF supported the concept of cap-and-trade as long as agriculture was not a capped industry. Ken stressed that supporting cap-and-trade did not equal supporting all climate change legislation, which was why it was



MMPA President and NMPF Officer Ken Nobis (front) testifies before the House Ag Committee.

critical that Congress address a number of concerns before the bill became law:

1. The bill must establish a strong role for USDA.
2. The bill's requirement for additional "performance standards" must be clarified so that CAFOs are not included in "back-door" climate regulation.
3. The bill should shorten the time allowed for setting up offsets program standards.
4. The bill must recognize and reward the avoided emissions efforts undertaken by agricultural leaders to reduce GHG emissions and/or sequester carbon.
5. The agricultural sector should be provided with an allocation of allowances, or a portion of allowance auction revenues.
6. Offset eligibility and compensation should be based on whether a project, technique, or practice sequesters carbon, or otherwise reduces greenhouse gases (GHG) from a date certain.
7. Global Implementation of Climate Change Legislation.

"We are grateful to the House Agriculture Committee for allowing production agriculture the first opportunity to provide input on the proposed Climate Change Legislation," Ken says. "Because the possibility of Climate Change Legislation is very real, the need to be involved structuring legislation is critical due to the possible enormous impacts on agriculture and society in general."

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producers and producer groups might have regarding how we might implement further recovery mechanisms for the current challenges in dairy and how we can position ourselves better when these supply and demand imbalances surface in the future. The task force will consider all proposals and advance their findings to the NMPF board for further consideration.

On a lighter note, we did have some opportunity for fun with the other YCs. The first night NMPF arranged for all of the YCs to do an evening tour of the monuments. It was an enlightening tour that

refreshed our memories of the times when we visited our Nation's Capitol in younger years. On the second evening, NMPF sponsored a Dairy Industry Reception where the entire board and all of the YCs were present to mingle with our elected officials and their staff. It was a wonderful forum in which to interact with the board, other YCs and the elected officials who attended. Both Rep. Dale Kildee and Rep. Vern Ehlers attended the reception.

Overall, we had a great time and great experience. It was a unique opportunity to continue

to build on those relationships we barely started last fall with other YCs around the country and an eye opening experience beginning to build those critical relationships with our elected officials that have potential to impact our industry and our farm for years to come.

We thank Michigan Milk Producers for their generous support of our trip and NMPF for putting together a great political leadership opportunity for the YCs.

Brad & Tonia