

# MMPA OYDC Visit Capitol Hill

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2009 MMPA OYDC

As MMPA's 2009 Outstanding Young Dairy Cooperators, we had the opportunity to attend the National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) Dairy Policy and Legislative Forum in early June. We arrived in Alexandria, Virginia ready for Capitol Hill.

As NMPF Young Cooperators Advisory Council members, our first session was with fellow YC council members to plan the upcoming YC conference this fall in Reno, Nevada. We discussed and evaluated the previous year's conference that was held in Grapevine, Texas. From speakers to activities and icebreakers, everyone had great ideas. We all could agree that the YC program is a wonderful opportunity to be involved and informed on political and everyday issues that producers face in the dairy industry today. It was a great chance to reminisce and reconnect with friends and fellow YCs that we met last year.

After the YC meeting we were introduced to the NMPF staff and participated in a question and answer session. There were great questions and responses regarding CWT, raw milk, and dairy imports vs. exports. We enjoyed dinner and then set out on a monument tour of Washington D.C. We were able to see the Washington Monument and the Lincoln, FDR, Korean War, WWII and Vietnam Memorials. The history and design of these monuments are very impressive and they have an air that commands silence and respect.

On Tuesday morning we started out with Jim Tillison, CWT Chief Operating Officer, discussing the Foundation for the Future program. This year is eventful with all the issues and policies in the

agricultural industry. There was much discussion and new ideas for discontinuing our price support program and replacing it with a margin protection program.

Next we prepared for our Capitol Hill visits. Dana Brooks, NMPF Vice President of Government Relations, gave us helpful hints with Lobbying 101. NMPF's Shawna Morris provided a trade briefing on how NMPF works to seek balanced trade agreements benefiting U.S. dairy producers. We then heard from NMPF's newest staff member, David Hickey, who discussed environmental issues, climate and greenhouse gas regulations, being stewards of the land and the Political Action Committee (PAC).

From there, we grabbed a quick lunch and set off to Capitol Hill with MMPA's Director of Member Relations and Public Affairs Sheila Burkhardt leading the way. Our visits started out with key staff members of Michigan Senators Debbie Stabenow and Carl Levin. We were able to brief them on our farm and personally invite them to check it out. We then discussed issues that directly deal with our industry such as U.S. Dairy Trade with New Zealand, halting the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from regulating greenhouse gases (GHG), child nutrition, food safety, round up ready alfalfa, and bulk milk storage. We are fortunate that our senators were knowledgeable and supportive of most of our issues and our industry. In between meetings we were able to view the Senate in session. On



our way to Congressman Bart Stupak's office we were able to catch him in route and introduce ourselves. Following our Hill visits we attended the Dairy Day Cheese Reception honoring America's Dairy Farmers where we got to share our day's experiences with NMPF board and staff members, elected officials and fellow YCs.

On Wednesday, we attended the PAC breakfast and heard Representative Leonard Boswell (D-IA) speak. We then had the opportunity to attend the NMPF board meeting. There was a buzz in the air with the new dairy pricing policy. It was a privilege to see MMPA President and NMPF treasurer, Ken Nobis, be part of the board that passed the Foundation for the Future and the new direction for U.S. dairy policy.

We truly enjoyed the opportunity and the great experience we had in Washington D.C. and our Capitol Hill visits. We would like to thank Michigan Milk Producers Association for the support and opportunity that was given to us and the NMPF for organizing a powerful political leadership event for the young producers and the future of the dairy industry.