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President

# MMPAC an Integral Part of MMPA Mission

When MMPA formulated its mission statement “to market our members’ milk to the greatest advantage possible” more than three decades ago, I doubt we had any thoughts that a well-funded Political Action Committee (PAC) would be such an integral part of carrying out that mission.

When I joined the board, I learned board members are expected to contribute to the MMPA PAC, but this was a bitter pill for me to swallow back then.

Before that, I had always been involved in the political process, but I wanted to do my own thing, sending contributions here and there to politicians who I thought were deserving. Over the years, I gained an understanding of the value of pooling our money to make things happen.

I still contribute to individual candidates, but that can’t come close to the effectiveness of PAC dollars. I realize now that an individual supporter has neither the access to all the information necessary to make informed decisions on all the issues facing us, nor the time to digest it and interpret it, even if the information could be assembled for easy access.

MMPA delegates at the most recent annual meeting adopted a resolution that strongly encourages each member to make a contribution to the PAC in the amount of \$1.00 per cow. In the past, the recommendation had been for each farm to contribute \$5.00 per month, but the new benchmark is more equitable in view of the diversity of herd size of our membership. This resolution reaffirms the importance of coming together in an organized way to have the greatest impact on government legislation and regulation that affect dairy farmers and agriculture.

We like to think that our elected officials will listen to us simply because we are their constituents. The reality is, with the cost of election campaigns today, they seem to retain a lot more of the information that we provide if it is accompanied by a campaign contribution.

The PAC money makes it possible for us to perform in a market that has become global rather than domestic. Fair trade laws are important today, and we can’t possibly navigate those waters on our own. We must work with representatives to put the dairy industry in a good position. Keeping MMPA and the dairy industry on the radar screen of our elected representatives as they make decisions that affect not only us but the people who consume our product is critical.

Michigan is unique, because we have many elected officials in Washington D.C. who are heavily involved in making decisions that affect agriculture. They take the time to meet with industry representatives to keep current on our industry and to understand our perspective so they can make informed decisions. Their support is valued, and maintaining those relationships requires attention.

Our PAC dollars are also hard at work outside of Washington. At the local level, these dollars have helped educate elected officials who have little knowledge – and instead often have misinformation – about our industry.

Many elected officials and industry representatives are eager to learn about our industry, but others continue to make decisions with little or no knowledge of what we do and how important it is to our state and federal economies. They sometimes wrongly interpret the impact of our industry on those who consume our product.

The responsibility falls on us to address this so that the dairy industry’s needs, and those of our customers, are correctly understood by state and national lawmakers and policy makers. Please accept the recommendation of your delegates, and contribute a minimum of \$1.00 per cow to the MMPA PAC. We can work together to make a difference.

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