

Federal Dairy Issues: Call to Action and Update *Summer Assignment: Visit with your Members of Congress*

Election Season

As we are all well aware, election season is upon us. The party nominating conventions are in the books and the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives are in recess. There are 34 Senate seats and all 435 House seats up in the November election. Incumbents will be home campaigning from now through Labor Day. After a few weeks of legislative business in Washington, D.C. in September they'll likely be out campaigning again for most, if not all, of the month of October.

Those of you in the so-called "swing" states, those half-dozen or so states where the Presidential race is truly competitive, may already be feeling the effects of all the political advertising you are being exposed to. Ohio is one of those states. One might say your national office staff "feels your pain." Still, there are a handful of issues that could come before the Congress and the federal agencies yet this year that will have an impact



on your business. **Please take the opportunity to let your Senators and House of Representatives Member know your opinion on these issues both by speaking to them directly when they are campaigning in your area and by getting in touch with staff at their local offices.**

Call to Action

An issue that is important to dairy farmers is the **Child Nutrition Act Reauthorization**. The U.S. dairy industry is united in asking for the return of 1% flavored milk and larger serving sizes of milk for older children to the National School Lunch Program. Those provisions are in the bill that has cleared the Education and Workforce Committee in the House of Representatives as is the return of 2% milk to the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) supplemental nutrition assistance program. Those provisions could go a long way toward providing more nutritious meals for our most at-risk citizens and reversing the downward trend of fluid milk consumption in this country.

The 12-nation **Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP)** free trade agreement is getting considerable attention in the Presidential race. This agreement is a step in the right direction for U.S. dairy farmers by placing tighter limits on questionable food safety concerns often used to keep our products out of foreign markets. It also prevents participating countries from negotiating with the Europeans to restrict the use of common cheese names. No, we didn't get the additional market access we were



hoping for, primarily in Canada and Japan, but on balance this agreement is one that both U.S. dairy farmers and processors support and we ask our Senators and House Members to do so as well should it come up for a vote.

A relatively new issue before the House of Representatives is the **Farm Regulatory Certainty Act (FRCA) (HR 5685)**. This bill would clarify that the solid and hazardous waste law meant to regulate landfills does not apply to nutrient storage and application on farms. The existing law, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) was invoked against agricultural operations in a federal court ruling in Washington State last year for the first time in the nearly four decades since that law was passed. The federal Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act regulate surface and ground water quality respectively, as do various state laws and regulations. No one would be “unregulated” should the new bill, the FRCA, become law. The FRCA would clarify that Congress never intended for RCRA to apply to a farm. Please encourage your Representative to become a cosponsor of HR 5685.

Issue Update

The current economic situation for dairy farmers in this country has led to a search for ways to help weather the storm. Just before the Congress recessed for the political party conventions, three Senators and a House Member circulated a letter asking for support for a request to Agriculture

Secretary Tom Vilsack to use his regulatory authority to provide assistance to dairy farmers.

There are no indications yet what the USDA may do in response to the letter. NAJ will

monitor the progress on this issue and communicate with the Secretary and key Members of Congress that any assistance provided must treat all producers the same and avoid picking winners and losers as some past programs have.

Finally, three key leaders on the Senate and House Agriculture Committees have written to USDA Secretary Vilsack asking him to extend the signup period for the Margin Protection Program – Dairy (MPP-Dairy) to December 31st of each year. The current signup period for the next calendar year of the program runs from July 1 – September 30 of the prior year.

What You Can Do

As Members of Congress are engaged in campaign activities this summer and fall, please make your voice heard to stress the importance of these legislative issues to dairy producers. In addition, if you are comfortable hosting visitors, invite your Members of Congress to visit your dairy.

The NAJ Equity Newsletter is Published for Supporters of and People Interested In Equitable Milk Pricing