

Home Grown Politics Across NH Farmland to Concord and Washington

It has been a busy three months since my last column. I have been to the Council of State Governments Eastern Regional Conference to participate in the Agriculture policy committee and where Sister Tara Sad of Walpole Grange moderated a panel on GMO Labeling. In January we both also traveled to Oklahoma City where I spoke as part of a panel on animal and farm protection legislation at the Agriculture Chairs Summit put on by State Agriculture and Rural Leaders (SARL). We won't talk about the trouble getting home because of snow across the country. Sister Linda Lauer, Master of Pine Grove, also traveled to Oklahoma City with us. Although these are both legislative organizations, it is interesting that the NH representatives to agriculture are all Grangers.

In early 2014 our Congress finally passed the 2012 farm bill. Both the National Grange and your State Grange pushed for a compromise bill, and it finally came at the 11th hour. I think the Grange is pleased as are most of the farm organizations to have a bill, although there are things in it that everybody can love and things that everybody can hate. The Rules for the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) are being re-written after there was so much outrage at the rules from smaller farmers, and all farm organizations here in the northeast, including your State Grange and your NH House environment and Agriculture Committee. The rules were really stacked against our small farms in New Hampshire and the rest of the northeast. Rest assured that we will continue to watch the rewrite of the rules and make our influence felt to protect the small farms in our state.

The NH State Grange lobbied the NH House and Senate on two bills, as your State Master, Jim Tetreault, wrote letters in support of the Grange position on both. We supported Livestock Protection and opposed Labeling of Genetically Engineered foods at the state level. Jim wrote that the labeling issue was a federal issue and in fact unconstitutional at the state level. We have also sent letters on a couple of National Grange efforts including one this morning on Medicare reduction of suppliers for Part D, which will negatively impact Grangers in rural areas of the US.

As I write this, I am mourning the loss of Lester Bradley a 50 + year Granger, a second generation legislator, and my friend. The world is a little better for Les having been here. Congratulations to the NH State Grange for winning best educational booth again at Farm and Forest. Congratulations to Sister Linda Lauer for her appointment as Grafton County Commissioner to fill the vacancy left by the loss of another 50 year Granger, Ray Burton, still another friend gone to the great Grange above. If anyone has any questions or thoughts on legislation before the NH General Court, please feel free to call or email me.