

Home Grown Politics Across New Hampshire Farmland to Concord and Washington

Since the last GSG issue, we have had a couple of events sponsored by the Legislative and Agriculture Department. At Spring Fling, we had a panel of New Hampshire Grangers who also hold elected office. At this year's event we had Town Clerks, County Commissioners, an Executive Councilor, and several State Representatives. The format was simple. A minute or two to introduce ourselves, what we want folks to know most about our jobs and then we opened it to questions from the attendees. Based on the feedback from Spring Fling attendees, we have decided to do it again next year. Invite your fellow Grangers to next year's Spring Fling and let's make the Belmont Middle School bulge at the seams!

Thanks to a suggestion from Former State Master Dick Patten, we held our third State Grange Day at the State House. We assembled early for a continental breakfast in the State House cafeteria. After breakfast we had a tour, of the State House, by our favorite tour guide, Virginia Drew. We Representatives that have the pleasure of frequent tours noted that it was a different tour than the 4th graders normally get. Even we old hands at the State House learned some new tidbits of history. During the tour, our State Master was presented with the Governor's Citation commemorating Grange Month in New Hampshire. After the tour there was a House Session at 10:00. During session the Grangers who were in the balcony were introduced by the House Clerk's staff. There was an extra treat in that it was Tartan Day, complete with bag pipes and a Scottish dancer.

Your Legislative and Agriculture Director sent a letter as both the Director and the Chair of the New Hampshire House Committee on Environment and Agriculture to the US Secretary of Agriculture endorsing a NH farmer to the National Lamb Promotion Board. The Lamb Promotion Board is currently made up of thirteen members, ten of which currently come from west of the Mississippi, and only two from this side of the River. We need a northeasterner on the board.

Several of us are planning for this year's National Grange Legislative Fly In to Washington, DC. We are set up to meet with staff for all members of the NH Congressional delegation. Since that trip will have already taken place by the time you read this, we hope that we had a good time, learned something, and made an impact on Congress.

I would like to mention the impact of NH budget cuts on agriculture. At the Dept. of Agriculture Markets and Food, the inspection of measuring devices by the Weights and Measure Department will be outsourced. The personnel to do the inspections have been removed from the budget and outsourcing authorized. Also DAMF had a 5% cut in current operating costs for things like utilities, and supplies. The Department of Education lost a million dollars in transportation costs for transporting kids from one district to another district's agriculture program. Education also had the State FFA Coordinator cut from the Budget, by the Governor. UNH took a huge hit in state funding, including a cut at UNH Cooperative Extension. Counties are also cutting County

Extension Budgets. Strafford County had the entire Cooperative Extension Budget removed, and therefore the office has been closed.

At the State level we did have some good news. State Meat Inspection Legislation is going to pass this year. It is not funded, but we move forward.

The Legislative Department has taken a position that we support staying in school and graduating. Look for a resolution to that effect. We may have some legislation coming for the next session that we can get behind.

Legislation like:

Clarifying the poultry exemptions for meat inspection

A preference for Local products by state agencies

Local labeling for NH Honey, Maple Syrup, etc

A Hemp Resolution asking the Feds to lift the ban on hemp.

The next time you go to the State Grange Building in Hooksett, you will find a NH Flag that flew over the state house in honor of the NH State Grange, donated by my wife and me.

Take a look at the Legislative and Agriculture pages of the State Grange Website. Wayne has done a great job for us.