

## **Home Grown Politics Across NH Farmland to Concord and Washington**

Now that the New Hampshire first in the nation primary is over, the media has gone on to the other early states and the phone calls and mailings have stopped, I hope life has gotten back to normal for all of you. It is an experience that we really should be proud of. The bigger states and the later states never get to experience retail politics at its best.

The Worthy State Master and I have taken a position and will be taking that position to the State Executive Committee to approve a resolution that the NH State Grange is opposed to eliminating dog licenses in our state. There has been a bill in the legislature to do just that. With every license, \$2 goes to the state spay and neuter fund and that has been a success and a model for the rest of the nation. It ensures that licensed dogs have had their rabies shots and allows for a census of dogs in each city and town in NH. It is a small source of revenue for the towns. It is also helpful in locating the owners of stray or lost dogs.

Although not a Grange event, I did go the annual meeting in Washington of the State Agriculture and Rural Leaders (SARL) in January. There were about 100 of us there from across the county. Most of us are either House or Senate Agriculture Chairs. We share what is happening in our states, work on common issues between states and gave our input to the 2012 Farm Bill. The Meeting produced 10 resolutions that all 50 states could agree on. Of the 10 resolutions, two came out of New Hampshire and a total of 4 from New England. Much of the policy decisions that we, in SARL make, fits very well with NH State Grange policy.

State Meat Inspection has been a priority of mine as an advocate for agriculture, the chair of the House Committee on Environment and Agriculture and as your State Legislative and Agriculture Department. We have passed a law authorizing State Meat inspection and are very proud of the law and all of its detail. Unfortunately the USDA has said they will not support it. Their objection to it is that we are not hiring inspectors, but using contractors. They also interpret the 2008 farm bill differently than the intent of Congress. To that point, I have a meeting scheduled with the Staff Agriculture experts from all four members of our Congressional Delegation. We are going to provide them with rules and laws that either need to be fixed to allow us to provide our farms with state meat inspection or talk to the USDA about their interpretations not being in sync with the congressional intent. SARL also produced a Resolution in support of NH State meat inspection.

I need your support for NH Agriculture. I am sending a letter to each subordinate Grange and asking all of those Granges to write a letter to all of their State Representatives and State Senators to support buy local, NH Agriculture, the New Hampshire Department of Agriculture Markets and Food, and the UNH Cooperative Extension. A letter from every Grange will send almost every Representative a letter stating the Grange position for support of Ag. The letter to

the subordinates will detail what the Reps need to hear. So many Representatives do not realize that there is any agriculture left in NH.

I was not able to make the Northeast Leaders Conference this year, as it was the weekend that I was in Washington with SARL. I did get to the area meetings in Barrington and Dalton, but missed the Keene meeting, as I was taking my Grandson Matt to Logan airport for his return flight to Montana. I have delivered all of the Legislative and Agriculture awards for the year. All but one of those was delivered in the rain.

I spent a fair amount of time at this year's Farm and Forest Expo. I was there on Friday afternoon and evening as the Chair of the House Agriculture Committee and in between worked the State Grange booth with Tara Sad and then back on Saturday to work the Grange booth again with Lois Enman. It was a well-attended Farm and Forest and our booth won 1st place in the educational category. A big thanks goes to Anne and Marty Boisvert for that.

The last time I wrote this column, we were worried about the Senate submitting a bill to consolidate the Dept. of Agriculture with other larger departments. I am happy to report that that bill was never submitted. I think we all made enough noise to stop it before it even was submitted. We still have a bill that will move the Weights and Measures Division out of Agriculture and put it in the Department of Safety. Please write or call your Reps and Senator and ask them kill it. Weights and Measures belong in Agriculture. Just think of all of the scales that weigh your food.