

MDPA Fall Meeting Legislative Update

End of Session

47 non-budget bills were adopted in the final two weeks; those bills grew enormously in size.

One ten-page bill grew to 198 pages by the time it reached the governor's desk

Bills affecting MDPA

HB 574 limits the groups who have authority to inspect agricultural land, including dairy farms. There is an exemption to allow county health depts. And other entities to continue to inspect to keep our farms compliant with FDA and The State Milk Board

HB 6 --Milk Board funding--passed without any change to the amount of funding requested by the Milk Board

Raw milk bills continue to be presented numerous times during the session. So far we have been successful stop them in committee

We expect to see the bill back next session

House Ag. Policy Committee

Is having a meeting in September to discuss potential legislation for next year. This is highly unusual.

The hearing was intended to discuss the primary issues facing agriculture, so it was no surprise that every group appearing focused their attention on the need to resume farm tax credits for nearly every area of agriculture. However, the most important aspect of the meeting was the Chair, Don Rone, announcing that the committee intended to hold hearings the first week of session and bring to the House floor by the second week a bill extending at least seven agricultural tax credits. The plan of the House is to get this bill to the Senate as early as possible to put the burden on them to get the bill passed.

One other event which may affect MDPA was a meeting I had with various banking associations. The banks will be seeking a tax exemption from State tax on income generated from agricultural loans which they claim will allow them to reduce the interest rate on such loans. We doubt that relieving the banks of State taxes on these loans will have much impact on the interest rate, and their proposed bill does not mandate a lower interest rate.

VETO Session

Although the House overrode four line-item vetoes in the State budget, the Senate refused to override on any of them. The only interesting event during this veto session was another blow-up in the Senate between the Conservative Caucus Republicans and Republican leadership of the Senate. This even led to some name-calling and intemperate comments. Disputes between these two factions of the super-majority Republicans have increased in intensity from the regular session and this summer's Extraordinary Session. It may not bode well for next year's session.