



THIS WEEK IN FARM BUREAU

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KEEP NJDA CAMPAIGN: The campaign to reverse the governor's attempt to dissolve the NJDA and the cabinet position for agriculture was well underway this week. Contacts by farmers with state legislators up and down the state were readily evident. Farm Bureau contributed to in-person meetings by farmers with prominent state legislators on a bi-partisan basis during the past two weeks, which showed no support for the governor's position and the start of a move to maintain the status of the NJDA. Farm Bureau has succeeded in having opinion articles published in major daily newspapers. On Wednesday, there were 10 different farm-related individuals who testified to the Senate Budget Committee in opposition to the planned NJDA demise at its first public hearing on the budget.

On Wednesday evening, at the annual legislative dinner of the Atlantic County Board of Agriculture, two state senators and a first-term assemblyman pledged themselves to oppose the NJDA closing. Senator Jim Whelan said to the audience in Hammonton on Wednesday that "you have my commitment" and openly scoffed at the thought of dispersing NJDA units into the DEP. Senator Chris Connors, who changed his schedule in order to join the dinner and discussion on this topic, said he would actively oppose any change of status for the NJDA. Assemblyman John Amodeo also pledged his support to the farmer's position. Topping off this showing of support, Atlantic County Freeholder Frank Sutton presented copies of a resolution adopted by the county freeholders on March 11 that "adamantly opposes any effort to abolish the NJDA as a cabinet level department and strongly supports the funding of the department's essential programs." County board president Bob Fenton chaired the dinner meeting; also on hand as guests were Ag Secretary Charlie Kuperus and Asst. Secretary Al Murray. Other freeholder boards passing resolutions supporting NJDA: Salem; Monmouth; and Morris. Others are expected.

PROTEST RALLY: Farm Bureau acting in concert with interested farmers across the state will hold a protest rally in Trenton against these NJDA budget cuts on Tuesday, April 1 (rain or shine). All farmers and friends of agriculture are welcome to attend. This rally will take place on West State Street in front of the Statehouse Annex. The date coincides with the last public hearing for the general public on the state budget, which will be held by the Assembly Budget Committee. Farmers who would like to bring their tractors or horses as part of the demonstration should contact Ed Wengryn at Farm Bureau. For more details, go to the NJFB website or await next week's edition of this newsletter.

BUDGET HEARINGS: There were 10 from agriculture who testified at Wednesday's Senate Budget Committee hearing on the FY '09 state budget, held at Rutgers University in New Brunswick. Several of their statements prompted questions from the senators on the panel, one of whom (Leonard Lance) was openly skeptical that the NJDA closing would ever happen. Those testifying were: Jim Giamarese (Ag Society); Bill Griffin (State Board of Ag); Cedar Lane Farms rep.; Mary Jo Herbert (equine industry); Bob Von Thun (Middlesex Co. Bd.); Dale Davis (Morris Co. Bd.); Diane Riley (food programs at NJDA); Alan Habiak (Middlesex Co. farmer); John Hauser (Middlesex Co. farmer); Fred Schieferstein (Union Co. Bd.). Two more budget committee meetings will be held next week: March 19 (Wed.), 9 a.m. at the Liberty Science Center in Jersey City (Assembly Committee); and March 20 (Thurs.), 9 a.m. at the Statehouse Annex in Trenton (Senate Committee). Appearances before the committee require placement on a witness list by committee staff; call Ed Wengryn at the Farm Bureau for details.

FARM BILL: Congress has passed a short-term extension of the farm bill to April 18, which is meant to give farm bill conferees and White House negotiators enough time to reach an agreement on the new five-year farm bill. The biggest problem to reaching an



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agreement: money, and the sometimes arcane terms of eligibility definitions for program benefits, a source of controversy for the farm bill among fiscal watchdogs. Should the negotiations fail to agree on all terms by April 18, expect a one-year extension of the current farm bill terms in order to have farmers informed of the rules governing this year's growing season.

HUMANE STANDARDS: On Monday, the state Supreme Court heard oral arguments on the appeal of the Appellate Division's decision upholding the NJDA's livestock handling standards. These rules were adopted pursuant to a state legislative mandate to create a benchmark that would guide enforcement during challenges of inhumane treatment of farm animals. Farm Sanctuary and other animal rights groups seized on the rule adoption as an opportunity to challenge livestock management practices in general, and filed this appeal. The NJDA Division of Animal Health under the leadership of Dr. Nancy Halpern has done yeoman's work in establishing these precedent-setting guidelines. The Supreme Court decision will occur no sooner than three months from now.

IMMIGRATION MEETING: The governor's Blue Ribbon Advisory Panel on Immigration Policy met in Bridgeton on Tuesday evening. This was the second of three hearings to take public comment prior to the panel issuing a report by December. Panel chairman and state Public Advocate Ronald Chen said at the outset that this group will not address the aspects of immigration policy that are in the federal domain, i.e., terms for lawful admittance to the country. He has said in the past that New Jersey must have a policy that addresses the rights and conditions for recent immigrants that have already

established themselves in the state. Most of the testimony were pleas for state program support by immigrant-rights activists; a few others used the hearing as a platform for strict enforcement of current immigration rules.

ANIMAL WASTE RULE: The NJDA has finally gained clearance from the Governor's Office to have the final notice of new animal waste management guidelines made public. The rule notice appears in the March 3 edition of the New Jersey Register. The proposal will require all livestock farms to follow the general requirements of the rule. More details next week. NJFB contact person is Marie Banasiak.

IN MEMORIAM: Charles Bylone, perhaps the most noted and influential person in South Jersey's vegetable industry in recent decades, died last week in Vineland. He was 84. Charlie was the longtime (40 years) general manager of the Vineland Produce Auction, a position now held by his son Peter. He also served Buena Vista Township as its clerk/administrator for 25 years. A calming influence in the often turbulent world of vegetable marketing, Charlie's integrity and desire to serve the interests of all farmers were unquestioned and led to the longevity in the positions he held. NJFB extends its condolences to his wife Pearl, sons Peter and Allan, and two daughters.##On March 4, former NJFB executive secretary Chuck Fields passed away in Marietta, Ohio. Chuck had a long career in service of farmers and Farm Bureau members starting with the Kentucky Farm Bureau and West Virginia Farm Bureau in the mid-1950's. He worked for New Jersey Farm Bureau from 1961-1974, followed by 15 years with the American Farm Bureau as a specialist in agricultural labor until his retirement. NJFB mourns his passing.