



Minnesota Crop Production Retailers

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Executive Director's Report



Hello MCPR members,
With so much news focused on politics and government, I have to really use this column to also deal with these

contentious issues. But let's have a little fun with what is currently a topic that makes most of us angry...Minnesota government.

Some of you may remember the movie "Gunfight at the O.K. Corral"

Those of us at the State Capitol on the opening legislative day were treated to a noisy, ruckus demonstration in the Capitol rotunda of red shirted advocates for gun control. Encouraged by group of fresh-faced newly elected DFL House members providing Democrats with a majority over the Republicans in the Minnesota House of Representatives, the demonstrators seemed certain their excitement would spill over into locking up some of those guns and gun owners. The Republicans controlling the Minnesota Senate with a very slim margin appeared just as determined to stop any gun control legislation at their feet. D.O.A. the term goes.

I was reminded of the 1957 American western classic film starring Burt Lancaster as Wyatt Earp and Kirk Douglas as Doc Holliday. As I look at the agenda for the newly elected Governor Walz who seems to have waffled on his gun control and solid N.R.A. voting positions in his recent

run for and election as Minnesota's new Governor and his "sidekicks" in the MN House, it seems logical to conclude that gridlock will once again grip the Minnesota Capitol for the next two years. And that's both good and bad, from the MCPR membership perspective.

A shoot out at the Minnesota OK Corral means taxation will be front and center with no clear way forward. One would think a \$1.5 billion projected surplus would be sufficient to allow Minnesota to conform to the Federal Tax Law changes passed during the first year of the Trump administration and also provide plenty of funds for transportation spending. Nope.



Governor Walz campaigned on a gas tax increase and he means it. And, he also wants to bring back the 2% health care provider tax which was set to "blink off" in the next fiscal year.

The appointment of Thom Peterson as Commissioner of Agriculture was welcomed by most farm advocates as a common-sense appointment of someone who knows how to get along with everyone in agriculture. Thom has been a lobbyist for the MN Farmers Union for many years. But from my knowledge of

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Capitol Update

In case you hadn't noticed, we had an election in November. Little changed in the Minnesota Senate as Republicans held on to their one vote margin 34-33. However, the appointment of Senator Tony Lowry by newly-elected Governor Walz to the MN Department of Human Services Commissioner position created a vacancy which generated a special election in Senate District 11. Senator Lowry's brother, Stu, recently won the DFL endorsement for a February 5 general election race against current Rep. Jason Rarick, a Republican from Pine City, and Legal Marijuana Now candidate John Birrenbach of Pine City. The Republicans do not risk their fragile majority as Senate District 11 has been in the DFL column for years.

Things are much different in the House, however. With a solid – to – majority, House DFLers' wasted no time electing Representative Melissa Hortman Speaker of the House and unveiling their "Minnesota Values Agenda" with the first 10 bills introduced. The proposed legislation included such themes as all-day preschool, increased money for schools, health care buy-in to MinnesotaCare, paid family and medical leave and earned sick and safe time for all, rural broadband expansion, gun control and sexual harassment controls. Of course, Governor Walz is all in for

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Capitol Update

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these proposals but also 'raises them one' by adding a gas tax increase to fund more transportation spending. However, most of these are D.O.A. in the Minnesota Senate. But we will have a lot of fun watching both political parties push what is envisioned to be the campaign themes for the election.

But you say, 'Wait a minute! Didn't we just have the election?'

Well, yes.

But in part, because the legislators created a funding mechanism to allow them to raise their part time salaries from \$31,140 to \$45,000 a year, a 45 percent increase, there is that much more incentive to get re-elected. But, that's not all. They are also allowed to collect a per diem for living and travel expenses seven days a week during the regular legislative session and for interim meetings after the session adjourns. House members receive \$66 dollars a day for expenses, on top of their salaries, no receipts required. In 2017, Representatives got an average of \$8,812 in per diem, bringing total pay to almost \$53,812. State Senators get even more in expense payments: \$86 per day. They collected an average of nearly \$6,861 extra cash in per diem payments, bringing their total, part-time pay to \$51,861 a year.

With many of the new DFL House members coming from the Twin Cities suburbs, one can begin to understand why the next election is the defining subtle issue of every political debate and press release. Good pay for part time work can motivate folks to get involved and run for office.

The House reorganized the Committee structure in a way that has gotten the attention and concern of most ag lobbyists. Once again, similar to the last time the DFL controlled the Minnesota House of Representative, they combined the House Ag Policy and Finance Committees into one. Only this time, rather than Mpls Legislator and Environmental focused



Chairwoman Rep. Jean Wagenius, the DFL House Caucus selected for the Agriculture and Food Finance and Policy Division Chair Rep. Jeanne Poppe from the District: 27B, the Austin area legislative district. This was a much more ag sensitive appointment in the minds of most ag lobbyists who find working with Rep. Poppe much easier than the previous Chair. Her appointment was expected and appreciated by most ag advocates.

However, the 'other shoe dropped' with the naming of Rep. Jean Wagenius Chair of the new committee, the Energy and Climate Finance and Policy Division and Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division Chair: Rep. Rick Hansen - District: 52A. Of even more interest is another new committee, the Water Division Chaired by Rep. Peter Fischer. All Chairs are sensitive to arguments about creating laws and rules to control ag's contribution to pollution rather than Minnesota's history of focus on voluntary Best Management Practices (BMPs). The hearing agendas for these committees has already entertained presentations that make many ag advocates very concerned. The legislative Ag generated water pollution focus now has competition from the Ag generated climate change focus in the House Committee structure and power base.

Are we having fun yet?? Like I said in the Executive Director report, gridlock at the state Capitol is not necessarily a bad thing for ag. With the Committee hearing process just getting into full swing and the new Governor to propose his two-year budget soon, it will be a few weeks before we see the extent of MCPR member legislative challenges this year. ✨



Executive Director's Report

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lobbying for MCPR members for over 15 years alongside of Thom in many cases, he is a likable guy who will work to bring "peace in the valley" for agriculture in Minnesota. Before he was appointed, I chatted with Thom about the Walz administration profile for ag. Thom indicated his advice to the Governor-elect was something to the effect that he advised to not mess things up with extreme proposals that will get everyone riled up.

As the Committees start their work to debate and approve a two-year biennial budget effective from July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2021 and the policies each legislator supports with the majority having the say-so, MCPR will be there to promote your interests and engage you through timely information. We will be watching for fee increases, extreme environmental proposals, and will work with our friends in the agricultural organizations to increase our effectiveness.

Now on the federal level, trade wars, government shutdown, and gridlock in Washington D.C. is also restricting what the government can do to us and for us. And again, that's not all bad. We will be bracing for a long federal government shutdown which is now the longest in our nations' history. Stay tuned, MCPR members. It's about to get interesting at the federal and state government levels.

A little MCPR business here - we held another very successful C.P.M. Short Course and MCPR Trade Show in December. Plan to attend the 2019 Short Course and Trade Show December 10-12 in Minneapolis. And thanks to all of you who have promptly renewed your membership. Your support for MCPR is what allows us to work so very hard for you. ✨

Until next time,

Bill Bond

Bill Bond





Newly Elected MCPR Board Members

Meet two Board members elected at the 2018 Annual Meeting held during the MCPR Trade Show held in Minneapolis December 11. Both of these new Board members term started the three-year term in January of 2019.

Brian Meyer is Agronomy Operations Manager for Central Region Cooperative in Sleepy Eye. When asked what an important issue was



in our industry, he stated that a major concern is to "continuing to find help in every aspect of the coop." When asked his motivation for serving in the MCPR Board he offered that, "being in the ag business for twenty-five years, I think now is the time to reach out and broaden my knowledge and help to improve the direction of our industry." We learned that when Brian is not busy at work he spends his time, "Following our kids Baseball, Football and Volleyball games. Also Camping, Boating and Traveling." Brian and his family live in Fairfax, MN.

Kevin Crandall is District Sales Manager for Central Minnesota and the Red River Valley for Nachurs. In this position he works with ag retailers and their customers to sell mostly in-furrow



starters on row crops. When asked what he thinks the most important issues facing the industry are he said some concerns are, "Sustainable farming as commodity prices fall and providing elite services to growers and ag retailers to help get through this specific climate. Also, restrictive protocols pushed through by the government which will be misdirected in part because the people voting do not understand the ramifications of these resolutions." He also listed major companies merging which are leaving just a few major players controlling much of the ag industry from Fertilizer, Seed and Chemical. Finally, smaller numbers of workers and college students coming into the Ag industry and the older age of people who are in ag retail and wholesale industry looking to retire soon...will we be able to fill the demands and needs with such a small number of employment candidates? Kevin hopes that in his service on the MCPR Board he will be able to help with new ideas and be a new voice who cares about the current state of the ag industry as well as its future in the next 20 years. Kevin's hobbies include going to gym and lifting weights and going to sporting events including football and basketball. While Nachurs is based in Marion, Ohio, Kevin lives in Breckenridge, MN.

Welcome to the MCPR Board, Brian and Kevin! 🌱

Dale's View

Hello MCPR Members,
We had a tremendous and very successful CPM Short Course and MCPR Trade Show. I heard many compliments and some suggestions on improvements we can make for the 2019 Trade Show which will be held December 10-12, 2019 at the Mpls Convention Center and Mpls Hilton Hotel. During the MCPR Annual Meeting in December all current Board members running for reelection were elected. Congratulations to each one. Newly elected new Board members are Brian Meyer and Kevin Crandall. You may read about them in this issue. You may also remember the Board of Directors developed an idea to add advisors to our board team for increased communication and representation throughout Minnesota. At the January Board meeting the MCPR Board exercised the MCPR Bylaws authority to reappoint two the Honorary Advisory Board members who will serve two-year terms on the Board without vote, K. C. (Kevin) Graner, Pine Island, CFS, and Jeff Moon, Sauk Rapids, who works for Corteva. In addition, the Board has decided to add a couple more Advisory Board members who we are contacting to determine their interest to serve. On a final note, we announced at the annual meeting that 2019 would bring discussions about nitrogen, particularly 4R along with many others. If you have thoughts or concerns please don't hesitate to contact our office or myself with suggestions.

Dale Johnson

MCPR Board Chair,
Dale Johnson



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