



Legislative Session Preview: 2013

By Cory Bennett, Agri-Growth Lobbyist

Just two years after losing its control of the Minnesota House and Senate, the Minnesota DFL has regained its majorities in both chambers. The last time Minnesota had a DFL governor and DFL control of both houses was in 1990, during **Governor Rudy Perpich's** administration.

Entering Election Day, Republicans held solid majorities in both bodies of the Minnesota Legislature with a 37-30 advantage in the Senate and a 72-62 advantage in the House. The DFL needed to pick up four seats in the Senate and six seats in the House to take control. By the end of the night, the Democrats steam rolled themselves into the majorities in both chambers by picking up 9 seats in the Senate and 11 seats in the House. The DFL now controls the Minnesota Senate 39-28 and House 73-61. One of the most significant effects of the election was the loss of legislators with an agriculture background. Just nine of the incoming members of the House and Senate list their occupations related to agriculture. These results continue the decline of agriculture/farmer legislative representation at the State Capitol, from numbers that stood at 50 percent a hundred years ago to less than 5 percent after this November election.



Within a week after the general election, members of each party met on an informal basis to organize and elect leaders of their individual caucuses. In the House, Democrats elected **Rep. Paul Thissen (D-Minneapolis)** as the next Speaker of the House and **Rep. Erin Murphy (D-St. Paul)** as Majority Leader. House Republicans elected **Rep. Kurt Dautb (R-Crown)** as Minority Leader. In the Senate, Democrats chose **Sen. Tom Bakke (D-Cook)** as Majority Leader, while Republicans opted for **Sen. David Hann (R-Eden Prairie)** as Minority Leader. Not lost on the agriculture community was the lack of rural or agricultural representation in leadership positions. In particular, caucus leaders of the House of Representatives both reside in the Twin Cities.

With leadership set, the difficult task of choosing new chairs and creating the new committee structure began in earnest. The number of standing committees and their areas of responsibility are set at the beginning of each biennium by the Speaker of the House and Senate Majority Leader. Unfortunately for agriculture, the decision was made by both Senate and House leaders, to combine the agriculture finance committee with the environment and natural resources finance committees. For the past several years agriculture finance was either a standalone committee or a part of the agriculture policy committee. This was a very disappointing development and could pose a challenge as we plan the 2014-2015 agriculture budget.

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AGRI-GROWTH LEGISLATIVE CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

2013 AGRI-GROWTH POLICY LUNCHEON SERIES

During the Minnesota Legislative Session, **Agri-Growth** hosts policy luncheons to discuss timely issues, network with agriculture contacts, and get to know legislators, members of Congress, and special guests.

2013 schedule:

- January 29, 2013
- February 19, 2013
- March 12, 2013
- April, 16, 2013
- May 14, 2013

Speaker details for the January luncheon is listed on page four. Visit agrigrowth.org/events to learn more. Luncheons will be held at the Best Western Kelly Inn, with registration beginning at 11:30 a.m and a buffet lunch at noon. Cost per luncheon is \$25 for members and \$30 for non-members.

LEGISLATIVE & CONGRESSIONAL STAFF RECEPTION

Agri-Growth members are invited to join us in hosting legislators, congressional staff and other VIPs who help promote Minnesota's food and agriculture industry. The reception is complimentary for all members and offers hors d'oeuvres and refreshments. **Join us on January 30, 5:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. at 317 on Rice Park in downtown St. Paul, Minnesota. Visit legrec2013.eventbrite.com to sign up.**

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Member In Focus

Company: Minnesota Dairy Herd Improvement Association (DHIA)

Website: www.mndhia.org • **Location:** Buffalo, MN

Minnesota Dairy Herd Improvement Association (DHIA) is a non-profit organization offering a variety of testing and services to the dairy industry. These services include milk testing, detailed reports, sales and support of Dairy Comp 305 and Scout software, dairy cattle marketing through Cows For Sale, and identification tags. DHIA offers a complete line of identification products from All Flex, Destron Fearing, ZeeTag, Idology, Temple Tags, Y-Test, and Tru-Test.



Through milk testing and reports, Minnesota DHIA offers a cost effective method of monitoring somatic cell counts, calving intervals, age of first-calving, and the dairy producers return on investment. These elements are crucial to ensure the success of dairy producers. Somatic cell counts, a measure of udder health and milk quality, have been improving over time. In November of 2012, the state DHIA average was the best of all time at 230,928, a 37 percent improvement over 5 years and a 71 percent improvement over 10 years.

Minnesota DHIA offers two herd management software programs: Scout and Dairy Comp 305. They offer on-farm installation and training for these software products along with a technical support line. Workshops and seminars are also offered to dairy producers to ensure these herd management programs are utilized to their fullest. DHIA sells and supports Dart software for PCs, as well as Pocket Dairy and Pocket Cowcards software for use with Android phones and other hand helds. Dairy marketing is offered through a unique program called Cows For Sale. This service provides dairy producers the potential to market their animals both nationally and internationally at a low cost. It also offers producers the opportunity to acquire a list of animals available for purchase.

DHIA started through the county extension and **University of Minnesota** in 1910 and later centralized in 1978. The organization has a non-profit status because of their data sharing with USDA and U of M (and other land grant colleges) for research.

DHIA started using computers to calculate records in 1957 and migrated to entering data on farms in notebook computers on all herds in 1993. They have been licensing software to dairy farms, veterinarians, and consultants since 1992. Just over one quarter of their customers use the on-farm software for daily management. In 2006 DHIA started offering animal health tests using the milk sample. Since then over a quarter of a million cows have been tested. DHIA currently has 2,012 dairy farmer customer members with 285,832 cows enrolled.

Their 70 field representatives visit herds every month to collect information on production, reproduction, and animal health events. They leave action lists at each farm, and, within an average of 2.2 days from the farm visit, the complete information with lab and genetic data are mailed or are available online.

Q & A with Bruce Dokkebakken, DHIA General Manager:

How is your organization funded?

Dairy farmers who utilize the service are the major source of income. Consultants and software users provide the other five percent.

What is new at DHIA?

Use of handheld computers and RFID wands in parlors on sample day is becoming more common to optimize labor and data flow. More health type tests will be added in early 2013, including pregnancy check using the milk sample and analyzing early lactation animals for sub-clinical ketosis. More specialized reports include analysis of Sexed Semen Efficacy, Udder Health Monitor, Survival Report, Herd Progress Report, and Transition Cow Report. We expect to offer a Banker's Report in the first half of 2013. We are also beginning to offer webinars and are working on YouTube videos.

What are the key trends affecting your industry?

Larger herd sizes require us to look at technology and additional training for use in the field, while keeping in mind that our median customer is still our traditional 70 cow dairy. The increased interest in animal health drives more lab analyses to help customers. The mapping of the bovine genome and resulting genomic information is based mostly on DHIA data. So as genomics evolve, DHIA will need to collect additional information for calibration of the genomic formulas.

Also, The increase in the number of herds using automated milking systems (robots) has put us in the business of supplying special samplers for those customers, as well as customizing to meet their data needs.



The Minnesota Agri-Growth Council is an advocate for the state's food and agriculture industry. Founded in 1968, the Council is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that represents the shared interests of its 200-plus members, which include food and agriculture businesses, organizations and producers, as well as the service industries that support them.

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Within the last few weeks, DFL leaders in both chambers formalized who would lead their committees next session. Committees and chairs of interest to Agri-Growth members include:


Senate Agriculture, Jobs and Rural Development Policy:

 **Sen. Dan Sparks (D-Austin)**


Senate Environment, Natural Resources and Energy Policy:

 **Sen. John Marty (D-Roseville)**

Senate Environment, Natural Resources Finance:

 **Sen. David Tomassoni (D-Hibbing)**


House Agriculture and Rural Development Policy:

 **Rep. Jeanne Poppe (D-Austin)**

House Environment and Natural Resources Policy:

 **Rep. David Dill (D-Crane Lake)**

House Environment and Natural Resources Finance:

 **Rep. Jean Wagenius (D-Minneapolis)**

The Agri-Growth Council is very pleased with the selections of Senator Sparks and Representative Poppe as chairs of the Senate and House Agriculture Policy Committees and look forward to working with them this upcoming legislative session.

Appointments of individual members to various committees were completed in late December. Generally, members serve on three to four standing committees but assignments per member can vary from session to session. Usually, committees are balanced with respect to party, occupation and geographic area represented by the members of the Senate and House. The agriculture committee members in both the Senate and House

are a good mix of veterans and new legislators and Agri-Growth again looks forward to renewing past friendships and developing new relationships.

With leadership, committee chairs and membership complete, work can begin when the legislative session convenes on January 8, 2013. Certainly the most pressing issue facing legislative members as they enter session is establishing the 2014-2015 fiscal budget and how legislators will resolve the approximate \$1.0 billion deficit awaiting them. In setting the 2014-2015 budget, most anticipate that all options will be on the table including spending cuts and tax/fee increases. Other big picture items DFL leadership have mentioned as priorities include restoring the homestead tax credit, tax reform, paying back school shifts, job creation and capital investments.

As agriculture groups look to the upcoming legislative session and the new landscape of the legislature, lobbyist and association leaders are starting to develop agendas and strategies for what we anticipate are areas of concern and opportunity at the Capitol. Some of those issues, to name a few, include: budget effects to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Board of Animal Health and University of Minnesota; tax/fee changes; GMO labelling; raw milk; water quality; labor; restrictions on agriculture inputs and biotech; animal welfare; antibiotic in animal feed; and increased agriculture regulations. As with every session, issues may also arise that have not yet been brought forward.

Agri-Growth will be very busy in the coming weeks meeting with new chairs, committee members and legislative staff. As more than a third of the members elected to the legislature are new, Agri-Growth will be taking advantage of this opportunity to educate these freshman members on the issues and priorities that our important to our membership. ●

AGRI-GROWTH WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS FOR 2013

At the 2012 Annual Meeting, the **Minnesota Agri-Growth Council** Board of Directors appointed two new directors to fill the seats of outgoing and retiring board members. The 25-member board governs the Council, representing the diversity of Minnesota's food and agriculture industry, including ex-officio representation from leadership at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and the **University of Minnesota College of Food, Agriculture and Natural Resource Sciences**.

Darcy Pawlik will be filling the seat of **Jack Bernens** at Syngenta. Darcy is the N.A. Industry Relations Lead at Syngenta. The sec-

ond seat has been filled by **Alan Poff** with **Schwan Food Company**. He is filling the seat of **Bill Reilly**, also with Schwan. Alan serves as Senior Director of Government & Community Affairs.

The Board of Directors will also be adding a new director from **Cargill** soon.

Agri-Growth looks forward to working with the Board of Directors to serve as an advocate for Minnesota's food and agriculture industry

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Executive Officers:

Chair: Kristin Weeks Duncanson, Duncanson Growers

Secretary: Jim Winter, Ecolab

Treasurer: Steven Krikava, Land O'Lakes, Inc.

Immediate Past Chair: Joe Swedberg, Hormel Foods Corporation

Directors:

Mark Davis, Davisco Foods International, Inc.

Paul DeBriyn, AgStar Financial Services

Randal J. Doyal, Al-Corn Clean Fuel

Commissioner David Frederickson,

Minnesota Dept. of Agriculture

Meg Freking, New Fashion Pork

Tim Gerlach, Minnesota Corn Growers Assoc.

Roger Gilland, Gilland Feedlots

Michael Helgeson, GNP Company

Jerry Larson, Larson Farms

Kate Leavitt, SunOpta Grains and Foods Group

Dr. Allen Levine, University of Minnesota

Pat Lunemann, Twin Eagle Dairy & Minnesota Milk Producers Association

Adolph Ojard, Duluth Seaway Port Authority

Darcy Pawlik, Syngenta Seeds, Inc.

Steve Peterson, General Mills

Alan Poff, Schwan Food Company

Tom Rosen, Rosen's Diversified

Nick Sinner, Red River Sugarbeet

Growers Association

Dr. Michael Swanson, Wells Fargo Bank

Linda Tank, CHS, Inc.



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Become a member at:
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House Agriculture Committee Chairs to Speak on January 29th

The first Policy Luncheon of the legislative season will feature the Agriculture Policy Chair, Rep. Jeanne Poppe (DFL-Austin), and Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture Finance Chair, Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Mpls).



Poppe was first elected in 2004, and was re-elected in 2006, 2008 and 2010. She has been a college counselor at Riverland Community College since 1999, also serving as president of the Minnesota State College Faculty Counselors Association from 2002-2004. Prior to her work as a counselor, she was the college's director of admissions from 1995-1999, and the women's center director from 1993-1995. She was a workforce career counselor for the Private Industry Council from 1989-1993, and a senior citizens' paralegal for Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services from 1984-1989.

Wagenius was first elected in 1986, and has been re-elected every two years since then. Wagenius graduated from George Washington University in Washington, D.C. in 1963 with a B.A., and later attended William Mitchell College of Law in Saint Paul, earning her J.D. in 1983. She also attended the Jane Addams College of Social Work at the University of Illinois in the 1960s, and worked at Peace Corps Headquarters, selecting and placing new volunteers. She is also an attorney, and worked previously as a staff attorney for the Minnesota Court of Appeals.



There is still time to register for any of the five upcoming luncheons at policyluncheon2013.eventbrite.com. Luncheons are held at the Best Western Kelly Inn, with registration at 11:30 a.m and a buffet lunch at noon. Cost per luncheon is \$25 for members and \$30 for non-members.

The 2013 Policy Luncheon Series Sponsor is:

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