

Homegrown Politics

From Hudson across NH Farmland to Concord and Washington

For the folks that may not know me, let me introduce myself. I am the recently appointed Director of the NH State Grange Legislative and Agriculture Dept. I am also a member of your State Grange Executive Committee and the Master of the Hillsborough County Pomona Grange and a member of both Hudson Grange and an affiliate of Wattannick. Outside of the Grange I am Member of the NH House of Representatives elected by the good folks of Hudson, Pelham and Litchfield. In that role I now chair the Committee on Environment and Agriculture. I retired 5 years ago from Hewlett Packard. That is enough about me.

I took the reins of the Legislative Dept. from our new State Master Jim Tetreault. Jim held the position, along with other roles, for 12 years. I have big shoes to fill. Jim did a great job and included agriculture along with legislation. He represented the State Grange well in both Washington and Concord. The first thing I wanted to do was include Agriculture in the state department name. It indicates to everyone that we care about and work on agricultural issues as well as other legislation and issues important to today's Grangers. It also takes us back to our roots as an agricultural organization.

Let me introduce our committee members: Dan and Ruth Holmes (a husband and wife team) from Peterborough Grange; The Hon. Tara Sad of Walpole Grange and also the Ranking Minority Member of the House Committee on Environment and Agriculture; Marc Van Sant of Winthrop Grange; and finally Mary West of Chichester Grange. We expect to meet 3 or 4 times a year. We had our first meeting at Deputy School in December. Unfortunately only three of the 6 of us were able to attend that day. We did get organized though at Deputy School.

I was able to attend Northeast Leaders' Conference in Latham, NY in January. The Legislative and or Agriculture Directors from the six New England States and NY met with only Rhode Island not represented. We got acquainted and shared what each state is doing inside the Grange and lobbying our respective state capitals. We can learn a lot from some of the states, especially NY and Connecticut.

The NH State Grange, through the Legislative and Agriculture Dept., is partnering with the Farm Bureau and Agriculture in the Classroom. The Grange now has a seat at the Ag in the Classroom table with Mary West filling it. I am sitting on the Government Affairs Committee at the Farm Bureau. There will be other partnerships to come.

The Worthy State Master and I look forward to the Legislative Fly In during May in Washington, DC. While there, we will meet with the NH Congressional Delegation. We are also offering to host the Fly In the following year in Concord for the first in the nation Presidential Primary.

Tara and I traveled to Bath's Pine Grove Grange to award the legislator of the Year Award to Hon. Rick Ladd of Haverhill for his active support of Agriculture in NH. I attended 2 of the 3 area meetings in January to present updates on the Legislative and Agriculture Department activities. I felt bad about missing the first, but I was in Phoenix that weekend for the State Agriculture and Rural Leaders Summit.

Wayne Turcotte has added a page on the State Grange Website for the Legislative and Agriculture folks. I expect by the time you receive this quarter's GSG; we will have the page at least partially populated. I hope that our partnerships with the Farm Bureau, Ag in the Classroom and the Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food will be visible on the website. We are also interested in a lobbyist for the Grange.

The Grange was well represented at this year's Farm and Forest, with several of us staffing the State Grange Booth. Our booth took second place for educational booths at the event. I was privileged to accept the award for Booth Masters Ann and Marty Boisvert. Let me make a plea for more Grangers to visit the expo next year. Mark your calendar for the first Friday and / or Saturday of February 2012. Wear a grange shirt, jacket or name tag and make the Grange even more visible. It is worth seeing. While I am pleading, go to Grange Day at the Big E next year and march in the parade in late afternoon. We also need a good showing there. Help us get more folks there than Connecticut who always have the most. Stay tuned for more information on that September event. I look forward to 50 NH Grangers marching in that parade and helping to staff the NH room at the NE Grange building.

Finally, let me advertise Spring Fling on Saturday, 2 April at the Belmont Middle School, in Belmont, NH. We are going to have a panel with Grangers who hold elected office. The Grange has a lot of folks in public office. Come to the panel and ask The Worthy Master and the rest of the panel the tough questions. Save the softball question for me. Please come to Belmont and make this the biggest Spring Fling ever and show your support for your public servants that are your brother and sister Grangers.

Fraternally,

Bob Haefner