

Michigan Farm Bureau Questionnaire

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1a. High School: John A. Doelle, Tapiola, Michigan (a Yooper, 17 miles south of Houghton), Sept., 1963- June, 1967

Undergraduate: MSU, BS, Agricultural Economics, Sept., 1967 – Sept., 1970

Graduate: Univ. of California, Davis, MS, Agricultural Economics, Sept., 1973 – June, 1972

Law: Stanford Law School, Palo Alto, CA, Juris Doctor, Law, Sept., 1975 – June, 1978

Ph.D. Program: MSU, Educational Administration, 38 credits, Sept., 2000 – May, 2006

1b. I have had a varied career, which has included, but not limited to:

Agricultural economist/coop leader with Michigan Farm Bureau (2 periods)

Agricultural loan officer – 3 years with Ag Capital Company in Fargo, ND

Corn grower cooperative President – in Minnesota, producing 175,000 market hogs per year

Chief Financial Officer – Genetipork USA, Inc, a swine genetics company

Attorney, Republican Caucus for the Washington State House of Representatives – 3 sessions

Executive Director of the Governor's Cabinet Task Force on Water Resources

Michigan Public School Business Manager – 7+ years

1c. Youth hockey coach (13 years), soccer coach (8 years), Kiwanis President and Kiwanian of the Year, Explorer Post Advisor, President of the Second Rink Committee, Big Brothers-Big Sisters, Chamber of Commerce (Government Affairs Committee Chairman), etc., etc.

1d. No elected office, other the Precinct Committeeman and then County Republican Chairman

1e. Extensive campaign management experience, making the most of limited resources for maximum effect. I have advised legislators, observed them and have learned from them to be able to be effective and influential among my peers quickly once elected to the legislature.

3. I am ready to serve as the voice for the people in my district and the state to improve the business climate to create jobs. My background will allow me to hit the ground running. I sincerely listen to input from multiple sources, and will give the voters of my district a voice. I want to create an atmosphere in which all businesses can grow and prosper, rather than having the state bureaucrats trying to pick the future winners and losers in our economy, as we must get

the economy growing again. This focuses on supporting and growing our existing businesses, rather than trying to attract rootless and free floating industries via tax credits.

4. I have been cultivating the business coalition organizations, which started with ag (Farm Bureau), Chambers of Commerce, NFIB, Business Leaders of Michigan, Citizen's Research Council, Center for Michigan, the housing industry, realtors, etc., etc. as well as the County Republican organizations. I am also getting significant support from the Tea Party organizations, Conservative Caucus, Campaign for Liberty, Americans for Prosperity, CTV, Friend of NRA, etc.

5. Communication all begins with developing relationships with the individuals and organizations, so personal contact is particularly important up front. I would ask how the Farm Bureau organizations and individuals would want to be communicated with. Some like periodic visits in the district, some like to come to Lansing to visit, some like e-mail blasts on mailing lists on specific topics, and some still like good old paper (letters or other publications). For those who use Facebook, podcasts and or video e-mails, these modern methods can be used to broadcast information. A major challenge will be responding effectively to input, so the relationships will be key. Contact with the Farm Bureau lobbyists will be essential, as well as contact with the county organizations in the policy development process.

6. The major problem facing all the people in Michigan is a stagnant economy with excessive unemployment, and subsequent high foreclosure rates and other financial difficulties. People are just plain hurting.

There is no one silver bullet to the problems, nor any quick fix. Improving the business climate is critical. To that end, resisting any further tax increases (and obtaining reductions if possible) and trimming the costs of government are two general objectives. For more specifics, the lists created by the Chamber of Commerce, NFIB, and the Business Leaders of Michigan are great starting points, with their proposals pretty consistent with the Michigan Farm Bureau policies. Frankly, I believe any long term sustainable solution includes significantly trimming the wage and benefit levels of state employees and public school employees, rather than year after year trimming the number of employees in essential services. Also, part of the task of improving the business climate to create jobs is maintaining our transportation infrastructure, and our roads in particular. We must increase the amount we are spending to maintain our roads, or they will cost us more to rebuild many of them than it would cost to do preventive maintenance.

7. The major problem with agriculture in Michigan is the loss of the connection most people have with the production of their food – many simply have no appreciation for the production process. Without that connection, they can be easily swayed by the empathy sellers with stories of cruelty to animals in food production, hazards of chemicals used to control weeds or other pests, genetically modified food, etc. that do not connect with reality. PETA and the US Humane Society can play off people's ignorance. All this leads to more regulation dealing with how

farmers can produce the food we all need to survive. Little recognition is given to just how important an industry agriculture is to the State, number two and perhaps even number 1 again in the future.

Stating the problems is a lot easier than prescribing the solutions, but working to educate the public about food production must be a centerpiece of any solution. As a legislator, I would work to defend agricultural production from foolish and needless regulation by bringing my experience and knowledge of production to the attention of other legislators. Perhaps making more public recognition for “good stewardship” and “conservation” by farmers would also enhance the farmer image. People just do not understand how technical ag production has become and how complex the business of production agriculture has become with all of the restrictions, regulations and reporting requirements currently imposed on farmers. I would help obtain attendance by legislators to farm visits where that would be helpful, not only at big, staged events, but informal visits. Maintaining ag programs in rural schools is also important to allow the youth to gain the skills needed in production agriculture, as many of our current farmers will not be in production much longer. The next generation must be cultivated!

8. Protecting ag lands from further development will be necessary to retain those lands for production which will be needed in the future. This will need to be done through incentive programs to prevent excessive intrusion into individual’s property rights to use their lands as they see fit.

I see the importance of protecting agriculture in Michigan as extremely important as the Midwest with rains will become increasingly important sources of food in the future, as the water in the West used for irrigation will be diverted to “higher” uses, i.e., municipal drinking water, etc, in the population centers. Whether this will fit into the “5 year” timeframe of the question is uncertain, but I see it as inevitable eventually.

In the 1990’s in Minnesota, we were involved in a lot of “value added” production of the products, whether those efforts were in pig production, ethanol, corn sweetener, fish production or whatever. I don’t know that the model used in Minnesota with the farmers vertically integrating into the next step of production is the answer, however, as most of the cooperative financed by the St. Paul Bank for Cooperatives during that period suffered severe losses. To the extent that further processing or processing into new innovative products can occur, that would be beneficial, so funding research into such possibilities at our research universities, such as my alma mater MSU, will continue to be important as well.