

For Immediate Release

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SHARING A VIEW OF THE STATE

Issues and Comments – 33rd Senatorial District

Senator

Chuck Purgason

This is shaping up to be quite an interesting year in the Missouri General Assembly. I am beginning to realize that there is a dwindling number of people in state government who believe that government is not that answer to all of life's problems.

It is getting to the point where I think a person would be well-advised to bring his or her own bottled water to the state capitol and not drink from the Kool-Aid bottles that are passed out by the lobbyists, special interest groups, and people running for higher office. It is very interesting in this election year that we hear especially from my party. I have always believed in a desire to work for a smaller, limited government with less bureaucracy and red tape --- a government that will allow individuals to work and provide for their families with income they have earned. My belief took a beating this week in our Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, Parks and Natural Resources on which I serve.

When you travel through the district I serve and talk with farmers and people associated with the agriculture industry, the overall feeling is frustration and the fear of what the future could bring to the farms across our nation. Everyone I talk with is concerned with the exploding costs of production and the falling prices for farm products. The cost of fertilizer, fuel, and feed is increasing on a daily basis with very little end in sight.

If this was due just to market forces you would say that the market would stabilize as it does in a supply and demand, free market system. Unfortunately, this is not the case. In the past few years both state and federal governments have put mandates, subsidies, and premiums on the promotion and growth of the ethanol industry. We as a state are currently spending \$41,775,000 on ethanol and bio-diesel subsidies with another \$16,000,000 projected in this year's budget for a total of more than \$57,000,000 in spending proposed in this year's budget.

This is an example of government favoring an agricultural special interest group at the expense of agriculture as a whole. This is especially true when one realizes that the recipients of these political favors are not the small farmers, but the many large corporations. Everyone likes the idea of energy independence, but we cannot continue to base that independence on a staple resource that is the base of our agricultural community.

With all of this in mind, this week the agriculture committee heard a couple of bills of interest. The first bill was a tax credit program for dairy farmers who buy replacement cows for their dairy herds. In testimony, the dairy industry, which is being hard-hit by our subsidies and mandates to support our ethanol industry, explained how hard it is to make ends meet in dairy farming today with the rising cost of feed and other production costs. This problem hits home especially hard because of the number of dairy farms we are losing across the state.

It was ironic that the next bill we heard and voted out of committee was a 5% bio-diesel mandate that is essentially identical to the 10% ethanol mandate that passed a few years ago. I opposed the bill and inquired as to how many times we are going to continue to kick the small, independent producer, who is struggling to survive in today's market, by passing more and more government mandates.

So, again, the General Assembly will be asked to vote on a mandate to help a special interest group that is already subsidized and supported by government programs and cannot compete on the open market without these subsidies. All this at the expense of the rest of our agricultural industry.

Please pass the Kool-Aid.