

More than saving dogs behind H.R. 1468

MIDWAY through the 2009 legislative session, Bob Kraft reflected upon the three biggest issues he felt farmers should watch during the back half of the legislative session.

You can guess two of the three. Indiana Farm Bureau remains firmly opposed to passing legislation that would put a constitutional amendment ques-



Guest Editorial
By TOM J. BECHMAN

tion concerning tax caps on the ballot in 2010. Plus, anyone tied to the livestock industry, including farmers raising feed-

stuffs, needs to monitor the debate on changes in rules for confined animal feeding operations.

You might never guess Kraft's third call to arms. The legislative specialist for Indiana Farm Bureau suggests watching House Bill 1468, the so-called puppy mill legislation, closely.

Why should you care about some-

thing called puppy mill legislation? Maybe you have a farm dog, but likely don't breed dogs for profit. The legislation is designed to give authorities more power to deal with dog breeders who push the envelope.

Stealth issue

Even Kraft acknowledges that they are well-meaning people behind the legislation. But it's the hard-core animal-rights groups who use well-meaning people to advance their cause that farmers must watch, Kraft asserts.

Such groups as the Humane Society of the United States have sent lobbyists to Indianapolis to support this bill. The HSUS is the same group that helped pass Proposition Two in California last November. Proposition Two says that by 2015, animals must have enough room to turn around without touching another animal. Voters passed it nearly two to one, even though science says chickens are healthier in cages than in free-range situations.

California egg producers could be forced to move elsewhere.

"We firmly believe their objective is elimination of animal agriculture," Kraft says. "Since we don't have ballot initiatives in Indiana, they must work through the Legislature. First, it's something that seems totally unrelated, like puppy mills. Then they'll be back, probably wanting to tighten the animal cruelty law. Eventually, once the pattern is set, they'll try to convince legislators that the next natural leap is regulating how farm animals are raised."

Formidable foe

What makes animal-rights groups like HSUS and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals such wiry opponents is that they have both time and money. Not connected to county humane societies, they let anyone think what they wish about what money would be used for when collecting donations.

"They're well-funded, and they're willing to wait as long as it takes to get what they want," Kraft says. "Farmers need to be aware that they're here, walking the halls of the statehouse, aiding well-meaning people while pushing their own cause."

Kraft and many others believe animal agriculture is the ultimate target. At least some leaders within various animal-rights groups picture an America of vegetarians, with no livestock production.

"We need to stand up and start protecting agriculture before we're the direct target," Kraft says.

He believes agriculture, not just farmers, must mount a serious campaign to educate the 80% of the consumers in the middle who aren't farmers or animal-rights supporters about the truth behind modern agriculture.

We agree. It starts with being aware of the world around you. Tell your legislators to think through House Bill 1468 very carefully before casting their vote.

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