

Prepared to cast my ballot in 2008

NEWSPAPERS across the country have endorsed national and local candidates this year, as they do in every election year. I figure, at least for a few key races, it's time for me to make my calls. Unlike the situation in newspapers, my choices represent little ol' me — and no one else.

Every year the politicians pay less attention to the farming community.

OUR SAY

The reason is clear. There are fewer and fewer voters on our farms.

Some of you may recall I opposed the tobacco quota buyout. Yes, economics were driving it, and I suppose it had to be — “Que sera, sera.” But I believe

we, the farm community, have to hold out and hang in there in every instance just as long as possible, to hopefully preserve our numbers. We all knew the buyout would end up with fewer people with close ties to the farm.

Since the candidates hardly ever mention the farm (we asked, though — see Page 8), I believe the most important concern this year is which one

most shares our values.

John McCain is my man this year. I never thought I'd say that because I don't like some of the legislation he pushes. On the other hand, Barack Obama is such a poor candidate that McCain shines in comparison. What have I got against Obama? I believe we glimpse the truth about a politician by what comes out in little unintended flashes. Then, when they backfire on him, the politician spends the rest of the campaign trying to cover up. In Obama's case these are things like spending years in a church led by a radical minister teaching radical points of view. It's a wife who has never been proud of America.

It's also being ranked the No. 1 liberal in the entire Senate — more liberal than No. 2, Ted Kennedy, or No. 3, vice presidential running mate Joe Biden.

Sen. Elizabeth Dole gets my vote. She has been a great supporter of agriculture over the years, shepherding the tobacco buyout through the process and opposing national tobacco taxes. Dole also supports drilling for oil off the continental shelf which I don't believe is the case with her opponent, state Sen. Kay Hagan, despite what Hagan may say.

Another drilling supporter, Pat McCrory, gets my nod for governor.

A rock and a hard place

I went to see some tobacco farmers in the northeast Piedmont this month who are concerned about black shank (see pages 6 and 7). Some of them have lost 50% to 75% of their tobacco crop.

These farmers have had to expand their operations until they stretched their capabilities to the max. The Ph gene varieties, immune to Race 0 black shank, allowed them to do this. But as they grew, the economy of scale adjusted to their higher production, and prices went down. Now black shank has shifted to Race 1, and they need to cut production so they can rotate crops again. But if they do cut production, the slim profit hardly makes tobacco worthwhile.

Meanwhile Ridomil Gold, the only product effective against the new black shank, is \$700 a gallon. Talk about a rock and a hard place!

Now they are impatiently waiting for new technology to help them out. Unfortunately, grower numbers are so low it is unlikely a company will think there is a big enough market to push a costly new product up the Environmental Protection Agency hill.



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