

This election critical for ethanol

I CAN'T see Bill Northey or Craig Lang voting for Democrat Barack Obama for president. Northey and Lang, both Republicans and prominent Iowa ag leaders, are strong supporters of farm-grown renewable fuels such as corn-based ethanol. But their party officially isn't — not in this election.

The Republican Party stunned corn growers recently after adopting a new resolution calling for a repeal of the renewable fuels standard, specifically on ethanol. The policy states, "The U.S. government should end mandates for ethanol and let the free market work."

Corn growers and the ethanol industry are disappointed in this plank put in the Republican platform at the GOP's 2008 national convention. The new statement directly opposes the strong support for the RFS in the 2007 federal energy bill, which was backed by Republicans and Democrats in Congress and by President Bush.

As Iowa secretary of agriculture, Northey is our state's most visible booster of ethanol and biodiesel. As leader of the state's largest farm organization, Iowa Farm Bureau President Lang strongly supports renewable fuels and cites the need for a comprehensive energy policy. Both understand the important role ethanol and biodiesel play in the Iowa and U.S. economies and in our national security.



Editor's Note

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Major change in policy

The new GOP position on biofuels marks a major change from its 2004 party platform, which called for expanding the use of ethanol as a way to reduce dependence on foreign oil and increase revenue for farmers.

Northey says eliminating the RFS "has the potential to undermine the next generation of renewable fuels still in development stage. If people see ethanol being undermined by government policy, it'll make investors very hesitant to finance development of alternative fuels like cellulosic ethanol."

Ethanol and biodiesel are the only renewable liquid fuels in use today helping reduce U.S. dependence on foreign oil. "We need biofuels. We don't want to limit the energy options available to Americans," says Lang.

Farm Bureau supports the RFS.

While Republican presidential candidate John McCain is an outspoken critic of ethanol subsidies, there are also

Democrats in Congress who oppose the RFS. However, this is the first time a major U.S. party has taken an official stance against publicly funded ethanol incentives. Northey says he and other Iowa Republican leaders would have opposed the plank's inclusion if they would have had the chance.

RFS is still needed

Iowa Republican Sen. Charles Grassley says, "I disagree with that part of our platform. If we were to have \$140-a-barrel oil for the rest of our life, we may not need mandates. But if we didn't have mandates, we wouldn't have the renewable fuels industry we have now."

Northey, Lang and Grassley remain committed to renewable fuels, and they vow to continue to try to educate candidate McCain and his top advisers on the importance of biofuels.

"Ethanol has created a real savings at the pump for motorists," says Northey. "We've gotten to this place of skyrock-

eting fuel prices because of a lack of fuel alternatives. Doing away with the RFS would make the problem worse. The Republican platform does call for more flex-fuel vehicles, and I fully support that. But we need to make sure we have the fuel to run in those vehicles."

The current RFS requires 9 billion gallons of ethanol be blended into the nation's gasoline supply this year. While the GOP position on the RFS is unwelcome to ethanol boosters and to most Iowans, it may be without much risk to McCain's campaign nationwide since current ethanol use exceeds the federal mandate.

McCain's longstanding opposition to ethanol is highlighted by the new platform position and his top advisers hope that will help him challenge issues important to rural voters. Remember, McCain voted against the farm bill. I'm listening closely to what both candidates have to say about other issues, too. Meanwhile, ethanol has my vote.

Campaign gets word out

By ROD SWOBODA

THE Iowa Renewable Fuels Association has launched a media campaign to set the record straight regarding renewable fuels, and food and fuel prices. The statewide effort is using radio and newspaper advertising to remind Iowans that biodiesel and ethanol use leads to lower prices at the pump and grocery store.

"Even in Iowa, people can be misled by the constant barrage of inaccurate attacks on renewable fuels," says IRFA Executive Director Monte Shaw. "Whether in Iowa or nationally, the renewable fuels industry isn't going to sit idly by while major corporations unfairly attack ethanol or biodiesel. The facts are clear. Renewable fuels are dramatically reducing the price of fuel. That means savings for consumers at the pump."

He adds, "Large corporations that are members of the Grocery Manufacturers Association, along with the National Petrochemical Refiners Association and large corporate livestock entities have all attacked eth-

anol for increasing food prices despite the fact that numerous government and academic reports have concluded this charge is groundless."

The radio and print ads can be viewed at www.IowaRFA.org.

"Sky-high crude oil prices and out-of-control commodity speculation have pinched the pocketbooks of the public and many industries," says Shaw. "Some groups want to hide their profits during this tough time and are trying to use ethanol and renewable fuels as the scapegoat."

Regarding the plank in the Republican Party platform calling for an end to the renewable fuels standard, Shaw isn't particularly surprised it's in there. Republican presidential candidate John McCain has never supported the RFS or ethanol incentives. And, vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin is governor of Alaska, an oil-producing state. "To take a word that was used a lot at that convention, I think there are a lot of Republicans who are gonna be mavericks when it comes to this platform," says Shaw.

Iowa is the leader in renewable fuels production. The state has 32 ethanol refineries with capacity to produce 2.5 billion gallons annually. There are 12 ethanol refineries under construction or expansion that will add over 1.2 billion gallons of annual capacity. In addition, Iowa has 14 biodiesel refineries with a combined annual capacity of over 315 million gallons in operation. Many additional renewable fuels projects are under development.

IRFA was formed in 2002 to represent the state's ethanol and biodiesel producers. IRFA fosters development and growth of Iowa's renewable fuels industry through education, promotion, legislation and infrastructure.

He said it

"With the RFS and other ethanol and biodiesel incentives under constant attack, it is important to consider the energy policies of the candidates in this election."



Monte Shaw,
IRFA

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