

My name is Doug Darling. I am a farmer from Monroe County on our sesquicentennial farm. It was my privilege to serve on the Commission of Agriculture for 12 years, from 1995 – 2007. It was a pleasure to serve with 12 other commissioners, three different directors, and with 2 different administrations.

I am opposed to Governor Granholm's Executive Order removing the authority to appointment of the Director of the Department of Agriculture from the Commission of Agriculture. I support Concurrent Resolution 24.

The Commission of Agriculture is responsible for over 200 statutes by law. The statutes range from food safety, drain codes, weights and measures Act, grade A milk law, right to farm, food law 2000, and countless others.

The legislature passes bills and the Governor signs them. They are then given to the Commission of Agriculture to promogate these rules and regulations. The commission is bipartisan, but many times non-partisan in action, with a diverse background and experience from various geographic regions of Michigan. The elected officials have reconzied that the commission has a greater level of expertise and relationship with the industry to create these rules

The commission has never taken this responsibility lightly. Due to the number of statutes that the commission and the department of Agriculture are responsible for, periodically due to the litigious society we live in, from time to time legal actions are taken which individuals are utilizing the rules and regulations for their defense, or suits against those same rules and regulations.

When this occurs, often the Commission of Agriculture is listed as part of the suit. On occasion commissioners have testified, but often it is the commissioner's designee who testifies (usually the Director for the Department of Agriculture).

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If you were involved in legal action, you would want the individual representing you to be working for you. If the Director was a political appointee, there could be concern in certain situations that the governor's political agenda may influence the testimony or outcome.

Therefore, with the tremendous number of statues that the commission is responsible for, it is imperative the Director be appointed by the Commission of Agriculture.

The director position should not be given as a political favor, or for being a friend of someone, or due to campaign contributions. The commission has always viewed it as a job interview for the best individual. The commission looks for someone with an understanding of the agricultural industry, food safety, and the sciences involved, the legislative process, and the relationship with non-governmental partners. He or she must be able to lead the department, and to motivate and inspire its staff to carry out the department's responsibilities.

The governor taking away the commission's authority of appointing the Director has no financial benefit to the state, and is simply a political power grab and is centralizing control.

Thank you for your time this afternoon, and consideration of my comments.

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