

# President's Message



**Randy Schmitt, President**  
*Rugby*



Easter greetings to all from the Schmitt Ranch! This is the season we should all take time to reflect on the many blessings we enjoy and the sacrifices Jesus made for us.

As many of you have likely heard on the radio, seen on social media or other news outlets, a small group of individuals is challenging the constitutionality of the North Dakota Beef Commission (NDBC) makeup, claiming to do so in the name of protecting the liberty of North Dakota's cattle producers.

They are certainly entitled to their opinions on how checkoff dollars are invested. However, their focus appears to be more on whether individuals nominated by the NDSA or applicants who are ultimately appointed by the governor are NDSA members.

We should be clear: there is a meaningful difference between supporting a program and seeking to fundamentally change or oppose it. The positions and affiliations associated with this small group, at times, have publicly reflected opposition to the checkoff itself. At the same time, they have raised concerns about not being appointed to the Commission.

The governor's responsibility in this process is to carefully vet all applicants, whether submitted by the NDSA, other industry sectors or through self-nomination, and appoint individuals who will carry out the mission of the Commission. That mission is to ensure that pro-

ducers' hard-earned checkoff dollars are used effectively to strengthen and advance our industry. It is reasonable to expect that those appointed are committed to that purpose.

It is also important to recognize that efforts to significantly alter or dismantle the beef checkoff are not new. These issues have been brought forward through the legislative process on multiple occasions and have not been successful. Now, they are being pursued through the courts.

The claim that the NDBC is unique in relying on an appointment process is not accurate. Many agricultural commodity groups in North Dakota, including those representing dairy, oilseeds, wheat, barley, corn, soybeans, dry beans and dry pea/lentil crops, utilize appointment mechanisms, particularly when addressing vacancies, and often operate with a combination of elections and appointments. The majority of them also include eligibility provisions tied to refund participation. When viewed in that broader context, the structure of the Beef Commission is consistent with many producer-led commodity groups across the state.

Equally important, participation in the process remains strong. The Beef Commission has experienced relatively low vacancy rates compared to some other councils, reflecting continued engagement from producers who are willing to step forward and serve. In my view, that

...Continued on page 52

## PAST PRESIDENTS

### 1988-90:

Roger Stüber • Bowman • (701) 523-5371

### 1992-94:

Dean Meyer • Dickinson • (701) 225-2736

### 1998-2000:

Richard C. Tokach • St. Anthony  
(701) 445-7390

### 2000-02:

Gene Harris • Killdeer • (701) 863-6695

### 2002-04:

Jeff Dahl • Gackle • (701) 485-3762

### 2004-06:

Melvin Leland • Sidney, Mont.  
(701) 565-2347

### 2006-08:

Mark Huseth • McLeod • (701) 439-2385

### 2012-14:

Jason Zahn • Towner • (701) 720-7247

### 2014-16:

Steve Brooks • Bowman • (701) 523-6732

### 2016-18:

Warren Zenker • Gackle • (701) 320-2585

### 2018-20:

Dan Rorvig • McVile • (701) 797-7338

### 2020-22:

Jeff Schafer • New Rockford • (701) 947-2568

### 2022-24:

Jason Leiseth • Arnegard • (701) 770-1129

S  
T  
C  
B  
J  
N  
Z  
R  
V

