



# United Voices

Gene Gregory – Editor



## HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS ISSUE

- \* California Election Results

### This Special United Voices Is Primarily Dedicated To The California Election Results

#### Reflections on California Ballot Initiative

Editorial By: Gene Gregory

The citizens of California have cast their votes for the future of the California egg, veal, and pork farmers. The ballot initiative (Proposition 2) passed by a vote of approximately 63% in favor to 37% being opposed. We ran an aggressive, sophisticated political campaign but couldn't overcome the negative campaign run by the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). While there is no veal in the state, egg and pork farmers will have until January 2015 to either leave the business or change the way they house their animals. Science has been disregarded for emotions. Cages for laying hens and sow gestation crates will certainly be outlawed and maybe other forms of egg production systems.

Passage of the proposition will not improve the health and welfare of egg laying hens. In fact, it is very likely that the opposite will occur. Egg farmers have long understood the many benefits of keeping their hens in cages. Likewise, pork farmers are concerned about the impacts of the proposition and issued the following statement: *"We are disappointed that the voters of California adopted a proposition outlawing a husbandry practice deemed appropriate by decades of farmer experience, as well as by university researchers and the nation's leading veterinarian association"*.

Remember the Humane Society of the United States and Farm Sanctuary sponsored Florida ballot initiative to ban sow gestation crates. Last week it went into effect and the state's two hog operations that were affected went out of business.

The California ballot language for chickens was worded so vaguely that the state will have to determine how this new law actually will be implemented and enforced when it comes into effect in 2015. The language reads as follows: **"Fully extending limbs means fully extending all limbs without touching the side of an enclosure, including in the case of egg-laying hens, fully spreading both wings without touching the side of an enclosure or other egg-laying hens."** This language if enforced would virtually eliminate all egg production other than free-range systems. It is questionable whether egg farmers can survive based upon the ballot language. Will the legislation really be enforced prohibiting any chickens from touching one another or the sides of an enclosure? Enforcement of the ballot language is virtually impossible because birds do flock together and enjoy the social closeness with one another. Or, will science-based cage-free guidelines be acceptable? Regardless of what is acceptable we know that most California egg farmers will not survive if forced to produce only non-caged eggs.



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The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) has continued to argue that even the egg industry's own economist said that it would only cost one (1) penny per egg to be more humane to chickens. While everyone in the egg production business knows that it costs considerable more than a penny an egg, it doesn't really matter. The competitiveness of the egg industry causes business to change from one account to another for as little as a penny a dozen. So imagine what happens when your competitor can produce and sell eggs for 12 cents less per dozen.

We believe that approximately 95% of all eggs sold to California consumers come from cage production farms. California consumers have a choice with a variety of cage, cage-free, and organic eggs already on the grocery shelves. Consumers vote everyday with their purchase and when they want more than 5% of their eggs from systems other than cages, the farmers will produce them. It is simply bad business and bad legislation to force the production or manufacturing of anything that the market doesn't demand.

California egg farmers have a major decision to make between now and 2015. Some will convert to cage-free, while others will not. Even those that make the conversion will end up owning far fewer hens. In the competitive world, I see no way California egg farmers can compete with out-of-state or out-of-country eggs unless the state legislature puts forth a law that prohibits cage eggs from being sold in the state. California currently has approximately 19 million laying hens. It is my opinion that by 2015 we could see no more than five (5) million hens meaning that most egg farmers were forced out of business and their investment and business they enjoyed gone forever.

Unless prohibited by law, grocery stores, restaurants, hotels, etc. will continue to look for the cheapest eggs possible. This means they will purchase eggs from someone other than California farmers. There will be exceptions like **Whole Foods** who handed out vote YES flyers in their stores and who want to make a social statement hoping to attract a certain segment of the market. It is time for all others to educate themselves on the consequences of the passage of proposition 2. It is time for them to understand that locally produced eggs will not be available. It is time for them to understand that these vegan activists want an ultimate elimination of all animal products.

California egg farmers like all family farmers are hard working people that get up everyday hoping to make a profit producing an abundance of affordable food. These same people understand and have implemented the science for animal welfare, food safety and environment. The National Pork Producers Council said: *It is regrettable that animal-rights groups were successful in vilifying honest, hardworking farmers and ranchers who treat their animals humanely and provide them a safe, healthy environment in which to grow*".

Tell me how many eggs or pounds of pork do the city folks produce in Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego and other major cities that voted for proposition. The answer is none. They don't feed themselves and must depend upon someone else to do so. And yet, they voted to put farmers out of business. What kind of country are we living in when we are willing to vote out of business the very people that feed us?

Farmers won the intellectual argument in this battle for Proposition 2 but lost the emotional feelings. Many voters have such a loving relationship with their pets and can't disassociate the life of a farm animal from that of a pet.

Back in April people were polled and reported that 95% would vote for Proposition 2. After hearing arguments both for and against, the poll showed that 72.5% would favor the proposition. Our educational campaign about egg production and the consequences of proposition 2 began and we saw the polls changing to a 50/50 position. Then HSUS began their negative TV campaign with disparaging videos. It has been said that a picture is worth a thousand words in creating an impression. This misrepresentation of family farms created an image that was hard to overcome.

Interviewed by Time Magazine, Wayne Pacelle (President & CEO of HSUS) said this about social change. *"Social change occurs on an incremental pathway. For those who want to see more people adopt a vegetarian diet and not have animals slaughtered for food at all – I do believe that this discussion about Proposition 2 builds important awareness about our responsibilities to animals"*.

In a victory speech to his supporters, Pacelle said: “No state in the U.S. and no Agribusiness titan anywhere in the nation can overlook this mandate”. He further said: “The trend is unmistakable, and its time for agriculture and those other businesses in the food chain to drop the last of their opposition and implement the future, starting now”. “We’ll engage constructively with farmers and businesses that take responsible steps to improve the welfare of animals. The others, unfortunately, will learn their lessons the hard way – beginning with the wrath of consumers”. **“Passing this measure also would provide additional momentum to our efforts at the federal level”.**

Gene Baur, president of Farm Sanctuary and one of the co-sponsors of Proposition 2 says this: *We look forward to seeing these confinement systems phased out nationwide.*”

A senior attorney at HSUS, Peter Brant, said he believes the proposition is a sign of things to come in other states, and possibly at the federal level. On a federal level, Brant said legislation in the new, heavily Democratic Congress is definitely possible.

HSUS believes they now have an animal friendly White House with the Obama election. HSUS vice president, Michael Markarian, says” *“The presidential ticket endorsed by the Humane Society Legislative Fund emerged as victorious on Tuesday night, with Barrack Obama and Joe Biden elected as our next president and vice president. HSFL backed Obama and Biden because both senators have been strong supporters of animal protection legislation”.*

One of Pacelle’s stated priorities is a federal bill know as the Farm Animal Stewardship Purchasing Act, which would set animal-welfare standards for foods produced for school lunches and any other federally funded nutrition programs. Pacelle is not talking about science-based guidelines, but instead his version of guidelines.

Pacelle has never lived on a farm or worked with farm animals and yet he knows better than farmers and scientist how they should be treated. I don’t think so!! I think he has a social agenda that is unrelated to animals.

Ingrid Newkirk of PETA had this to say, which clearly shows the intent of most of the vegan activists. *“Farmed animals in California will be given these basic necessities by 2015, but we will continue to spread the message that the best thing that people can do to help animals is to **stop eating them altogether**”.*

Based upon the actions and words of these vegan activists, we believe it is clear that they will quickly push for state and federal legislation through either ballot initiatives or sponsored legislation to ban most science-based animal welfare guidelines for egg laying hens, veal, pork, and possibly other farm animals.

Their agenda doesn’t stop with just farm animals. HSUS was successful in this election with a Massachusetts ballot initiative to ban greyhound dog racing in the state. Their agenda also includes hunting, zoos, rodeos, and any other way in which we use or enjoy animals.

Agriculture spent approximately \$8 million on this campaign and lost. We appreciate and thank all those that contributed to agriculture’s campaign. Never has anyone spent this much money to challenge HSUS. With their 10 million members, ability to raise lots of money, to misrepresent the facts about the welfare of animals, to draw upon the emotions of pet owners, and their open door by a willing liberal media, they are a force to be concerned with.

Should this movement move across the country through other states or federal legislation, we would see a retraction of farm animals to the point that Americans will be buying most of their food from foreign countries. We will not feed ourselves without foreign imports unless we take actions quickly to educate legislators and the public. Many of these countries do not and will not have the equal standards for food safety and animal welfare as are implemented by American farmers.

HSUS would like for the public to believe that these modest legislations will improve the welfare of animals and that farmers will convert to more costly systems. They would like for you to believe that the price of eggs will rise, consumer will pay the price, and farmers will be compensated and happy. This is far from the truth because the vast majority of egg farmers don’t like producing eggs in non-cage systems and will simply go out of business. The model is already in place in Europe where farmers are moving their business to more friendly countries.

Casey Langan, a spokesman with the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation had this to say: *“Passage of the measure would damage or dismantle agricultural industries in California and could also shift production to other parts of the world where*

*regulation of both animal welfare and food safety are less stringent.”*

The Center For Consumer Freedom said: *HSUS’s massive budget, unwarranted positive public reputation, and deep-pocketed Hollywood friends will only become a greater threat to industry in a post-Proposition 2 business environment. It is crucial that a key broad cross-section of agricultural leaders start managing this nationwide threat now, before it is too late or too expensive.”*

It is time for everyone employed by or connected to agriculture to get involved. It is time to tell your friends what this is all about. It is time to contact your state and federal legislators. Grain farmers better take notice of this movement because it will severely impact your business and your markets. It is time to educate the public. It is time for us to go to the mountaintop and yell so loud that our voice echoes throughout the world that American farmers are being forced out of business.

It is time for the CEOs of grocery chains, restaurants, hotels, etc., to stop being bullied by the activists and take a stand for American farmers. These activists don’t eat or purchase animal products from your place of business. It’s time you stand up for those that provide you with an abundance of affordable food, which you pass on to an appreciative customer.

Back in 1999 an independent scientific advisory committee began looking at the farming practices of the egg industry. From their scientific review came forth a set of recommendations, which were adopted by more than 80% of the egg farmers of the U.S. and is known as the UEP Certified program. It has costs egg farmers millions of dollars to do it right and to meet the expectations of our customers. This program was and remains the most aggressive animal welfare program of all of animal agriculture in the world. Will science be disregarded in our future? Will a Disney World image of animals be the norm of the future? Will we go back to production systems of the 1950s?

Just think for a moment of the problems and costs with converting all current egg-laying housing systems to a non-cage system. First you begin by telling your lender that you can no longer use or pay for the housing they loaned you money. Second, think of the difficulty in getting building permits with today’s environmental restrictions. Think of an investment at a minimum of \$6 billion dollars to maintain the same number of hens as we currently have. Think of the possibility that animal activists may find ways in which to legislate even non-

cage systems out of business. Think of the increased costs to consumers? Think of the difficulty in maintaining the high quality food safety and animal health programs we have become accustomed.

It is time for the egg industry to look for opportunities to protect their business while also maintaining the science that supports the way we produce eggs. In the near future, UEP will bring together a selected group of egg farmers and consultants to review the damage from California and set a course for the future. Within the next few months many questions will have answers and recommendations will be made to the UEP members.

UEP is prepared to take a leadership role or a supportive role with anyone, in or out of agriculture, to counter these activist challenges. We are calling upon everyone producing or selling agriculture products to join us in this fight. It is time for all of us to become **United**.

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### **Omni Reservation Form** **By: Linda Reickard**

The October 1<sup>st</sup> newsletter included the first notice of our January Board meeting and a registration sheet for rooms at the Omni. If you did not see the registration form and would like a room at the Omni, please contact Linda Reickard (563) 285-9100 and we’ll send another form.

However, the IPE (International Poultry Exposition) has moved up the date for turning in rooming list, so the date on the form is incorrect. It will now be turned in on November 14 to the Housing Bureau. We still have rooms available for anyone attending any of our meetings. **On November 13 we will accept room reservations for anyone wanting a room at the Omni, whether attending our meetings or not, providing we have rooms left.** They will be accepted on a first come, first served basis. Please contact me as quickly as possible with any questions.

The dates of UEP meetings are January 27 and 28 following by breakfast briefings on January 29. The dates of the IPE are January 28-30.