



## COACT commends MPCA Citizens Board after fighting against the legislation that silenced it

### Supports restoration in 2017

The Citizens Board of the Minnesota Control Agency (MPCA) may be down, but not out.

Although legislation by big ag, big mining, and their legislative allies may have knocked it down, it can come back, according to COACT testimony at the Board's final hearing at MPCA June 23.

Having testified last August 26 for citizens requesting environmental review of the largest dairy feedlot expansion in state history, COACT returned June 23 to commend the Board for its 48 years of public service.

Executive Director Don Pylkkanen told the eight Board members that he witnessed their thoughtful deliberation in arriving at last August's decision to order an Environment Impact Statement (EIS) for Riverview Dairy, LLP, because the threats to the environment were real, based on knowledgeable testimony of the citizens and township board members.

**Looking to the future**, we support the Board's restoration in the 2017 legislative session, he said, which will allow well-informed citizens to continue to participate in the decision-making process that has always helped the Board make good decisions, according to MPCA's first Commissioner, Grant Merritt.

COACT's testimony continued by saying that, according to Deputy Commissioner Michelle Beeman, this process has given confidence to the public on the decisions it has made over the past 48 years. Rarely has the Board ordered an EIS, but here the need was overwhelming.

### First step taken this legislative session to federal waiver for MN single-payer plan Marty-Laine legislative plan is pathway toward "state's right" to single payer

As HMO contractors face disclosure of unaccounted millions in tax dollars for running the state's health programs, the first step was taken this legislative session toward the single-payer Minnesota Health Plan (MHP), which will be allowed under the federal waiver in the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare).

For any proposal to be considered for the waiver, Sen. John Marty and Rep. Carolyn Laine, chief authors of the MHP (SF2060/HF2209), introduced a study bill setting the principles that all state health program proposals must meet. They include affordability for all, cost containment, provider choice, comprehensive care, and public accountability which is lacking in the HMO system.

The Marty-Laine bill (SF813/HF1181) comes at a time when the HMO contractors are suspected of overcharging the state \$327 million, according to an outside audit by the Segal Company. The audit shows the HMOs reporting higher prices paid to doctors and hospitals than what the HMOs actually paid them.



**At the hearing, former Gov. Wendell Anderson thanks COACT farm leader Stephanie Henriksen for fighting for the Citizens Board which Gov. Mark Dayton intends to work to reinstate.**

Whatever the Board's decision, it provides a pressure-relief valve on contested proposals, because citizens know they can be fairly heard, according to Steve Morse of the Minnesota Environmental Partnership. In the end, this transparency and citizen participation make for good government, according to the League of Women Voters.

COACT's testimony concluded by urging Governor Mark Dayton to hold to his stated intention following the Special Session to work to restore the Board in the 2017 session and to use his executive power to make it an advisory committee to the MPCA Commissioner until its environmental review authority is reinstated.

### The Affordable Care Act (ACA) allows states to apply for a State Innovation Waiver (section 1332) in 2017 to create their own health care delivery programs. Basically, the state program must cover as many people as affordably and comprehensively as the ACA and cannot add to the federal deficit. Being single-payer, the Minnesota Health Plan is far superior in meeting these basics.

**Here's how the Marty-Laine legislative plan will get us there.**

**2015:** introduction of the Marty/Laine study bill that

1. sets the principles that all proposals must meet;
2. authorizes the Commissioner of Management and Budget to contract with the University of Minnesota to analyze the proposals that are offered;
3. invites proposals to be submitted to the legislature.

**2016:** passage of the Marty/Laine study bill.

**2017:** passage of enabling legislation that directs the Minnesota Department of Human Services to apply to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for the State Innovation Waiver to allow Minnesota to enact the selected plan that best meets the principles.