

Time to separate the wheat from the chaff

“There is no doubt that North Dakota is in the midst of an unprecedented transformation that has proven valuable to the state and its citizens in many ways,” said Lee Tillman, president and CEO of



JASON SPIESS
For Bakken Breakout
Weekly

Marathon Oil, at the Williston Basin Petroleum Conference.

Tillman then opined on the importance of the upcoming North Dakota legislative session.

“As we look ahead, the 2015 legislative session will be critical and we’re eager to work with the state’s elected leaders in Bismarck,” Tillman said. “We need the support of the legislature for critical infrastructure projects. State funding to provide Western counties with the hospitals, law enforcement and schools they need is vital.”

The North Dakota Agriculture Commissioner has become one of the more prominent positions in North Dakota. Already overseeing the number one industry, agriculture, the N.D. Ag Commissioner also sits on the Industrial Commission which oversees oil and gas. Reclamation, pipelines, the rail, rural North Dakota and other issues have become some of the most pertinent to North Dakota voters.

For our Energy Policy Special, candidates were provided three questions in advanced, limited to three minutes per question and were asked to refrain from using their candidate’s name in their response. All interviews were conducted in person and their responses below are transcripts of their spoken answers.

The 2014 North Dakota general election will feature two candidates for Ag Commissioner on this year’s ballot — Republican Doug Goehring and Democrat Ryan Taylor.

Question 1: Why should the people of North Dakota cast their vote for you in the 2014 election?

Goehring: Well first of all I have a deep intimate understanding of agriculture as a farmer myself and farming with my son in south central North Dakota I think makes me the best candidate. I’ve probably produced almost every crop in the state of North Dakota, I’ve ran a livestock operation. I understand those impacts, challenges and opportunities. But the other thing I bring to the job is

that whole drive that keeps a farmer and rancher going everyday which is you improvise, you adapt and you overcome.

I remember stepping into this job first thing, I came from the private sector and I saw some issues and I talked about, well, let’s develop some solutions for these things. And what we’ve done that others certainly try and have done is we develop real solutions for some real problems for some real results. I think looking at my record you can certainly see that we’ve developed a crop insurance product that can be used for identity preserve seed and or organic production. Took that to the AC21 committee at the national level. Also worked on the pollinator plan. A pollinator plan that is being used nationwide. It’s a model that can help enhance communications, develop best management practices for the ag community and for beekeepers.

Also we broadened the scope of our mediation program. No other program



Goehring

exists like this in the United States. The Port of Vancouver agreement, we found alternative methods to move grain on a backhaul system out of the state of North Dakota. (It) doesn’t solve all of our problems, but it’s a step in the right direction and it’s moving that ball a little farther. We’ve increased exports in the state of North Dakota over 70 percent in the last four years.

... It was a collaborative effort between the congressional delegation, the governor’s office and my office to work with the corn growers in North Dakota, the soybean growers and the livestock industry to get a genotyping center in Fargo. I mean we won out. We got it. We are the best place in the United States to place that thing.

I think that really speaks volumes of our staff here at the department of the other agencies that we work with, the private sector. It’s about collaboration, it’s about public private partnerships, it’s about understanding all the other entities involved in the economy in North Dakota and the Upper Midwest and across the United States, connecting the dots and developing relationships.

Taylor: Jason, I think it comes down to leadership for the number one industry in our state, which is agriculture. Leadership of ideas and we know affect the entire state. We’ve talked about rail transportation and getting that backlog cleared up, handling the issues with the landowners and surface owners as we try to merge both agriculture and energy in

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– Ag Commissioner candidate Doug Goehring

our state.

I think we need an Ag Commissioner that can bring people together and I believe I have a track record in that. And also someone who cannot only communicate well about agriculture and the importance of it in our economy, but also to have a department that engenders trust and respect and open communication.

I think the Industrial Commission seat the Agriculture Commissioner has is extremely important to both agriculture and energy and again in that role we want someone who both understands agriculture and policy, but also has the ability to bring people together at a really critical time in our state’s history.

Question 2: What are your views, thoughts and platforms on the relationship between agriculture and energy?

Goehring: There’s a lot of opportunities and there are certainly some challenges. I know one of the things we struggle with constantly is looking at those fundamental and constitutional rights that our private property owners have. Whether you are a mineral owner of a surface owner. Trying to balance those thing out. My approach has always been about mitigating risk, minimizing impact, shrinking that footprint and maximizing opportunities. But it also means working with others to find out where we have some of our deepest greatest challenges.

How do we overcome those given what statutory authority we have? What’s within our mean to helping in those matters? It’s one of the reasons we went back to the mediation program to broaden the scope of it and look at surface damages to look at some ways to better develop better opportunities so that a land owner or a farmer or rancher’s voice is being heard or at least their concerns and issues are being brought to the front and put to the table.

The legislature still has responsibilities there that they continue to work with. We can only do so much. But these are areas we just continue to work on and strengthen that relationship but also understanding that agriculture is an energy intense industry. We need energy. We rec-

ognize that. We know that there are areas that we need to continue to address.

For example, there are growing tensions about putting pipelines in the ground. A lot of farmers in North Dakota and the Upper Midwest are looking at western North Dakota and saying, “Why don’t you allow pipelines in the ground? Because if you would we could move more oil through pipelines and less on rail and that would alleviate some of our concerns with rail concern issues that we are experiencing in North Dakota.” Well that’s easy enough said, but there are some legitimate concerns and those are things are a working on with the farmers and ranchers in western North Dakota that we can provide some assurances when pipelines are put into the ground that they are being reclaimed properly.

We are going to continue to move along and address some of those issues. That really does bring us full circle to understanding the needs, issues, the desires and wants and still respect everyone’s fundamental and constitutional rights.

Taylor: We’ve talked about that throughout the campaign because they are our two most important and largest



Taylor

industries in the state with agriculture leading and energy very close behind. We’ve talked about issues that will bring landowners together with out energy developers because we know as we pull the oil out from underneath the ground we also need to take care of the issues

on top of the ground so that we continue to harvest the crop and graze cattle across the top of the ground.

We find some areas of tension there, but I think with the right leadership and ability to communicate we can bring those two together so that we accomplish both. And we need to accomplish both. We’ve talked about reclamation and mediation, distance from a farmhouse to a well and also making sure we prevent salt water spills before they happen.

This is good for both industry and ag-

Continued on next page