



13750 S. Sedona Parkway, Ste 5
Lansing, MI 48906

For Immediate Release
March 19, 2010

Contact: Betsy Braid
Phone: (517) 668-2676

Leading Agricultural Organizations Host Monumental Gubernatorial Forum

LANSING, MICH. – The Michigan Corn Growers Association (MCGA) was proud to partner with eighteen other leading agricultural organizations to host the first ever Gubernatorial Candidate Forum on Michigan Agriculture on Friday, March 19. The event drew more than 200 farmers, agri-business representatives, ag leaders and legislators from across the state to find out what candidates for Michigan's chief executive office have planned for our state's thriving agriculture sector.

After enjoying a continental breakfast and networking time, attendees heard three gubernatorial candidates, Sheriff Mike Bouchard, Senator Tom George and Rick Snyder, present their strategy for Michigan agriculture. Following candidate comments, event moderators took questions from the audience on important issues in today's ag-economy. Among those questions were inquiries into the candidate's thoughts on; biofuels – Michigan's ethanol and biodiesel industries in particular; Michigan Department of Agriculture budget cuts; inspection fees; tax reform; Michigan's State Fair program; equine slaughter; horse racing; state government efficiencies; streamlining government; and advocating for agriculture. After closing remarks from the candidates and the conclusion of the open forum, event attendees continued to visit with candidates and industry representatives.

A true success story for Michigan agriculture, this unprecedented event was the joint effort of the MCGA and the following associations; Cherry Marketing Institute; Julian Vail, LLC; Michigan Agri-Business Association; Michigan Allied Poultry Industries, Inc.; Michigan Apple Association; Michigan Cattlemen's Association; Michigan Equine Partnership; Michigan Farm Bureau; Michigan Floriculture Growers Council; Michigan Great Lakes International Draft Horse Show; Michigan Harness Horsemen's Association; Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association; Michigan Pork Producers Association; Michigan Soybean Association; Michigan Standardbred Breeders Association; Michigan Sugar Company; Michigan Vegetable Council; and the Potato Growers of Michigan. With so much at stake in the upcoming elections, these leading organizations decided it was important to educate members of the agricultural community on how each candidate will lead our state and our industry forward. In addition, they felt it was necessary to show our gubernatorial candidates the important role that agriculture plays in our state.

A key sector of Michigan's economy, agriculture is the second largest component of the economy adding over \$71 billion annually and growing five times faster than the state's general economy from 2006 to 2007. More than 900,000 jobs in Michigan are supported by agriculture and Michigan farmers produce over 200 agricultural commodities, more than any other state in the country, except California. With such a diverse and vital industry, it is critical that the next Governor of Michigan keep the state's more than 56,000 farmers and growers in mind during the next four years. It is crucial that the state's leaders actually know a farmer, what he or she does, and how this work impacts each and every person in our state. After Friday's forum, not only does the agricultural community now have a better understanding of agriculture's future under each candidate's leadership, but each candidate now has a better understanding of Michigan agriculture.

Headquartered in Lansing, the MCGA is a grassroots-membership association that has represented the state's corn growers' political interests since the 1970s. The MCGA works cooperatively with the Corn Marketing Program of Michigan (CMPM) a legislatively-established program that utilizes one-cent per bushel of Michigan corn sold and invests in research, education, new uses and market development. Michigan's corn industry adds more than one billion dollars to the state's economy annually and in 2009, Michigan's corn farmers harvested a record setting crop of nearly 309 million bushels. For more information, visit the website of the MCGA and the CMPM at www.micorn.org.

#JC#