

Representative Carlson,

In accordance with Section 3 of Senate Bill No. 2373, I am reporting to you and the legislative assembly on the progress on this bill and the involvement of the Grape and Wine Program Committee (G&WPC). A seven-member committee was put together to advise the Agriculture Commissioner and NDSU on priorities for research on the grape and wine industry in this state. The sum of \$250,000 was granted by matching funds to the extent of \$4 for each \$1 provided from other sources. Thus far, we have secured about two thirds of the matching funds required. I must say that as Chairman of the G&WPC, I was provided with the very best and most experienced personnel through the various agency representatives. I lobbied hard for this team and am grateful to all for their considerations and committee appointments.

From the onset, it was the committee's feelings that research for true cold hardy grape varieties would be the priority followed later by more attention to education, marketing and promotion of the industry. The varieties that are planted in this state now are primarily Elmer Swenson and the University of Minnesota varieties that do grow well in only a limited area of the state but are just not cold hardy enough for our weather conditions statewide. They are primarily bred for southern Minnesota and northern Iowa. We felt that flexibility was the key for us and adjusting our priorities would be paramount in ensuring the success of this bill. We selected NDSU as the main research facility and after close consultation with them, we would provide the university with a "roadmap" to carry out the project. We realized that NDSU had the best breeding program in the country but had little experience with grapes. We felt the best way was to bring in some outside grape breeding experience to enhance and expedite NDSU's endeavors. I cannot say enough how cooperative and willing NDSU was with this proposed arrangement. With all the experience on the committee (one member alone has over 30 years of grape breeding experience), we turned to a well-known cold weather grape-breeding consultant, Mark Hart, from Wisconsin for further advice. He toured the state and talked to many people involved with the grape and wine industry. We also consulted with Tyler Kaban of the University of Saskatchewan about the accelerated greenhouse breeding methods that he pioneered. After much thought and discussion, we presented NDSU with the "roadmap" that we envisioned as having the best chance for success. They agreed with the ten recommendations and four objectives developed by the committee and began immediately with Dr. Harlene Hatterman-Valenti leading the project for the university. Thus far, we have hired a part-time cold hardy grape breeder, identified one PhD candidate at NDSU, and have worked with many other enthusiastic students, growers and volunteers. Since April, the project has collected over 50 different parental lines, performed almost a hundred crosses, and grown several thousand seedlings from materials of our own breeding parents, as well as, seeds donated from interested and generous people from the Upper Midwest and Canada. These seedlings have already been planted into a field nursery to test for cold hardiness this upcoming winter. As other funds become available, we will initiate "Phase Two" of our proposal to include an additional research PhD candidate at NDSU with an emphasis in Enology. We have also continued germ-plasm collection with the location of many wild grape cultivars from river valleys across the state of North Dakota. This passion, coupled with our accelerated and traditional breeding techniques and evaluations, will increase our chances for a timely, successful program. As these new varieties become available, we anticipate more of our time and funds will be dedicated to education, marketing, and promotion as mentioned earlier.

Additionally, the committee has directed and helped organize the following:

1. The construction of a Riparia (wild river grapes) preservation vineyard on the NDSU campus for future conservation and use as breeding parents.
2. Summer 2009 - Absaraka vineyard tour and training with NDSU plant diagnostician and USDA entomologist. About 50 attendees.
3. Fall 2009 - Winemaking Project launched to utilize wine grapes produced at NDSU research locations and private vineyards. Novice winemakers had the opportunity to learn about roles that sugar and acid balance, yeast strains, skin contact time, and grape varieties make in producing a quality wine. About 25 participants.
4. Feb 2010 - G&WPC provided the funds to pay for part of the expenses for NDGGA members attending the MGGA Cold Climate Conference in Minneapolis. About 25 members took part. A record number from this region.
5. North Dakota Grape Growers Association (NDGGA) annual meeting in Carrington. About 100 people attended.
6. April 2010 - NDGGA sponsored 2 grape pruning clinics in Minot and Buffalo. Began the distribution of hard-to-get cuttings of selected cold hardy grape varieties. About 100 people attended.
7. September 11, 2010 - NDGGA Summer Vineyard Tour in Bismarck area with 100 people in attendance.

The concept of developing new grape varieties, the evaluation of current and new cultivars, enology, new winery and vineyard upstarts, and marketing will be a concerted effort on the part of the G&WPC, the NDGGA, NDSU, various state agencies, legislators, and the people of this state. It will truly be a team effort! I envision a day

when there will be wineries that dot the landscape along the towns, roads and highway system of this state that visitors can stop in for wine tasting made with grapes varieties developed here. Our Agritourism oriented wineries may also serve as hosting facilities for weddings, tasting events, office parties, holiday gatherings, and many other organized events, as well as promoting a wine culture and gracious way of living across our state. I have included the email addresses of the seven-member G&WPC. Please feel free to contact any one of us with questions, comments, or suggestions concerning SB2373 or any other matters about our grape and wine industry.

Rod Ballinger rodb@cableone.net - Fargo - Chairman G&WPC - owner Bear Creek Winery

Greg Krieger krieger@polarcomm.com - Galesburg - President NDGGA - wine maker - vineyard owner - Agriculture Commissioner designee

Alan Verbitsky averbitsky@SRT.COM - Minot - wine maker - vineyard owner - NDGGA appointee

Jeff Peterson jeff@povwinery.com - Minot - owner Pointe-of-View Winery - Governor appointee

Tom Plocher tplocher@msn.com Hugo Minn. - author "Northern Winework" - grape breeder, grower, and winemaker - NDSU designee

Rodney Howe rodneynhdsupernet.com - Hettinger - President SBARE and SBARE appointee

Jacob Belanger belangerjacob@hotmail.com - Hawley, Minn. - attorney - winemaker - vineyard owner - Commerce Commissioner appointee

Thank-you very much for your time and I am looking forward to the 62nd Legislative session.

Sincerely,
Rod Ballinger Chairman G&WPC