

My name is James Van Blarcom. Thank you for having me here today and recognizing the needs from the Northern Tier of PA. I am a dairy and crop farmer in Bradford County, PA. I have farmed for 47 years as a dairy farmer and now also as a hog and crop farmer. We employ over twenty full-time employees on the dairy farm and another twenty through the hog facilities. I farm with my two son-in-laws, one with the dairy and the other with crops. Our family hosts an annual corn maze for the community as well as a produce stand and greenhouse.

I have spent many years serving on our local Farm Bureau board and in leadership at the county level. I spent 26 years with the Bradford County Conservation District board, also serving as President and Chairman in those years. Currently, I serve as a board member on the PA Milk Marketing Board.

Our farm is constantly feeding and entertaining a lot of people through the daily farm activities, recreation opportunities like the corn maze and hunting. From employment, insurance, hunting laws, road maintenance and preparation, taxes to immigration issues, environmental regulations; our farm is very involved in every aspect of government. We are still a small family farm, which are critical to the health of the PA dairy industry. But equally as important to the aesthetics of the Northern Tier. As travelers come in to hunt and visit the area, they want to see farms as well as the hunting opportunities. Therefore, it is critical that we have good representation at the state and federal government level. This representation needs to be from the area as well as know the area's needs very well. Due to our rural nature, of the areas previously mentioned, our needs differ from the rest of the state.

One area of recent concern is stream bed clean up and restoration of our roads. The Northern tier has seen a significant increase in flooding in the last few years and our rural roads and creeks need major repair. Our needs are different as we travel over these roads with large farm equipment and trucks to get to fields and areas that are not commonly traveled, but critical to use for operations of our farms and services. The DEP does not understand at all the difference in our glaciated soils and gravel and clean up that needs to happen. Due to DEP current standards, just this summer, people lost their homes and it destroyed lives because DEP has been unable to see the needs of the area and how to accommodate appropriate care and maintenance to our streams. Therefore, it is critical to have local representation to inform groups such as the DEP of our needs.

It is important to note that the people making the decisions on the district lines, needs to be from their respective area. We should not have a judge or someone deciding these areas who lives and represents another part of the state. Therefore, the best choice for this decision making is within the House of Representatives – our elected officials from each region of the state.

The current district line makes sense. The western side of Bradford & Tioga County is primarily forest and recreation and east of the Tioga County line is 50% forest land and 50% agricultural and recreational land. Both areas contribute heavily to the hunting traditions of PA.