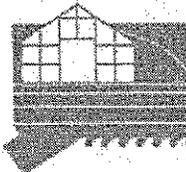


**Connecticut  
Florists  
Association**



**CONNECTICUT  
GREENHOUSE  
GROWERS  
ASSOCIATION**



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Statement of  
Bob Heffernan  
Executive Director  
Connecticut Green Industries Council  
before the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee  
on the Nomination of Steven Reviczky for Commissioner of Agriculture  
February 17, 2011

The appointment of a new Commissioner of Agriculture offers a new opportunity to make agriculture a high priority in Connecticut for expansion, job growth, and increased exports. For the past 50 years, the state's public policy has been to enhance and promote agriculture, but we haven't even begun to exploit agriculture's potential here.

We support Steve Reviczky's nomination because he has the right skills and experience to transform agriculture into a major economic engine. As a former first selectman, he knows how towns act and think—and he's seen how the state's 169 towns can either throw up roadblocks to farming with restrictions or embrace it to improve a town's quality of life. As a former employee of the Department of Agriculture, Steve knows the agency well from within. And as a former executive director of the Connecticut Farm Bureau, he's been an advocate for the *business* of farming, understanding well that the only way to truly preserve agriculture in Connecticut is to make farming a *profitable* enterprise in the state.

We are Connecticut's green industry—horticulture and floriculture. We are half of all of agriculture in the state, with over \$1 billion in annual sales, 48,000 employees, and 46,000 acres of land, operating in every town. So half of farming in this state is plants you *look at*, not food you *eat* (although we also grow food-producing plants such as fruit trees, vegetable starter plants, etc.). In

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## REVICZKY NOMINATION - 2

any given year, as much as 40-60% of the plants and flowers we grow are exported outside Connecticut, bringing in much-needed cash to the state. Also, our products at the retail level are subject to the 6% sales tax, unlike most food crops.

In the years ahead, we will urge the new Commissioner and the Malloy Administration to lower barriers to agricultural expansion in Connecticut. Our expectations of Commissioner Reviczky for a successful term in office will be:

1. To be a forceful advocate for agriculture within state and local governments. He must not be hesitant to argue farming's case, for example, with other Commissioners who in the past have often caused harm with their rulings, lawsuits, etc. (notably Environmental Protection, Consumer Protection, and Labor).

2. To treat all agricultural commodities fairly, not favoring one over another, and celebrating the diversity of Connecticut agriculture.

3. To increase the marketing of Connecticut-grown products, especially creating new markets outside the state's borders as well as in-state.

4. To oppose anti-farming initiatives, such as the unionization of farmworkers, restrictions on our rightful access to water, or elimination of the farmer's tax exemption. He must constantly point out that the state's farms are operating in the highest-cost state of the nation (labor, energy, land, taxes), and how keeping agriculture alive preserves the environment and Connecticut's quality of life.

5. To work with us in opening the farmland preservation program to our green industry by setting reasonable, workable standards for nurseries and greenhouses to lease preserved lands.

6. To embrace his role on the UConn Board of Trustees as the advocate for the College of Agriculture.

7. To understand that he is the titular head and spokesman for the state's entire agricultural policy apparatus, supporting also the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station and the state's 19 vocational agriculture high schools – a vital training ground for our future farming needs.

8. To pay particular attention to assisting farms in producing high-value crops and value-added items. One reason the green industry has risen to become half of agriculture in the state is because our horticultural crops return the highest value per square foot.

We pledge to work closely with Commissioner Reviczky in the years ahead, as we have with all preceding Commissioners. We know that his success in office becomes our success, too.