



Call to Action ... All Rice Farmers  
on  
**Your Right to Choose!**

*Please plan to attend the  
senate agriculture committee hearing*

**Tuesday, March 10, in Room 207**  
*On senate bill 349*

*help us lobby the Arkansas general assembly  
in support of this important legislation*

This Bill is about fairness and choice — your right as a rice farmer to choose where your promotion money goes!

In a legal document, **Riceland Foods** stated: The first buyers pass the economic burden of the assessments along to the rice producers (farmers) by paying less for the rice purchased in an amount sufficient to account for the cost of the assessment. The legislation does not double the current 2.7 cent a bushel rice assessment. The farmers simply pay it all now.

**This is about your right as an individual farmer to choose where your promotion money goes — that's all it is.**

Another reason for the proposed law is transparency. The USA Rice Federation has refused to answer **Freedom of Information** requests from farmers like you on how it spends your money. You deserve to be able to send your money where you can get answers.

**you know best how to manage your money**  
*This bill Lets you choose!*

Check our Web site for the latest information on the meeting.  
Let your legislators know you support SB 349  
to give farmers a voice and a choice!

## President's Column: It's Show Time

ARGA Members:

If you have been complaining about the way the USA Rice Federation represents you or does not represent you, your time has come. March 10 is the day to be in Little Rock at the state Capitol.

Senate Bill 349 will be discussed to see if each farmer will be able to choose where their promotion assessment dollars go. I want to thank you, our members, for paying your dues over the years to fund your organization. Those dollars have been working for you. But now, more than ever, I need to ask a favor of you.

**We need you at 10 a.m.** Tuesday, March 10, in Room 207 at the Capitol. We need bodies to be present in the

room the day of the meeting.

Legislators have talked about this bill being one of the more interesting of the session. And with every day that goes by, it gets more interesting. You won't have to speak to the committee, unless you want to. Just by being there in numbers could change a "no" vote to a "yes." I have been told that by the legislators.

**Rain or shine you need to come.** This is like voting for a candidate. If you don't vote you can't complain, because you had your chance.

With the way the Federation is flipping this back on us, by twisting and turning the words, I am almost ashamed to walk up the Capitol steps.

We need your help. We have not

asked for much from the membership, but now the call goes out.

**Not showing up gives** the Federation support for their cause. They could say if no one shows up, we don't care where our money goes, don't give them the pleasure. But that might be one of their only defense lines to use.

When you come, dress can be casual or, if you wish, wear a suit. That is up to you. The battle lines are being drawn. It's show time. See you there.

Yours in Ag,



**Kenneth Graves**  
President, ARGA

## Give Rice Farmers a Choice

**By Harvey Howington**

Lepanto, Arkansas

About 15 years ago I learned that all those people who had told me just to go home and they would take care of my business usually took care of my business in a way that benefited themselves and not me. The USA Rice Federation is the most blatant violator of that trust.

The Arkansas rice check off raises around \$6 million each year. It is an illusion that farmers only pay half that money. Riceland Foods in a lawsuit said the buyers just lower the price they pay the farmers to cover their half of the assessment. **The farmer pays it all.**

Half of that money (\$3 million) goes to the University of Arkansas. Farmers are proud to be able to support the research that is so valuable to them.

**The other half of the** check off money is designated for the promotion of rice. The way the current check off law is structured all the promotion money ends up at the USA Rice Federation. The Federation is completely controlled by the mills. There are 22

members on the Federation's board of directors, and 15 of them have direct links to a rice mill or merchant.

You might wonder how that affects you. Millers are buyers of rice and want to buy low. Farmers are sellers of rice and want to sell high. There is a natural conflict that exists because of this business relationship.

As a farmer I have wondered how the Federation was spending my money. The Arkansas Rice Growers Association has sent five requests for information since 2000 and has yet to receive any meaningful answers.

**The Federation fought** our Arkansas Freedom of Information request in court and used the excuse that they are a Texas-based organization doing business in Virginia to avoid telling us how they spend our money.

We know how they spend some of it. A few years ago Riceland Foods was accused of dumping rice in Mexico. The Federation spent \$750,000 on lawyers for Riceland Foods.

Over the last few years, the USA Rice Federation Millers Group has taken trips to The Grand Wailea in Maui, Hawaii, and the Atlantis Paradise

Island Resort in the Bahamas. This year the location is The Ritz Carlton Amelia Island in Florida.

**The domestic promotion** committee has had to make do with The Hilton Scottsdale, Arizona, and the annual business meeting of the Federation is held each year at The Four Seasons Resort and Club, Dallas at Los Colinas. All of these trips are either wholly or partially funded with farmer and taxpayer money. Sounds like a pretty sweet deal, doesn't it?

By the way, if the Federation wants to dispute this, they can answer the FOI request. But they won't do it.

The fact they are traveling well on our dollar is not the worst of it. For "promotion," they have chef rice cooking contests at four and five star resorts all over the world. I wonder just how many people they think they are influencing to buy rice at these events?

**The Arkansas Rice** Growers Association is sponsoring Senate Bill 349 in the state legislature to give farmers a choice. The way the research money is handled and who it goes to will not change one bit.

*Continues*

# Choice

*(Continued from Page 2)*

**The bill will give farmers a choice where promotion money goes.**

You will fill out a form administered by the state Department of Finance and Administration at the point of sale directing where you want your promotion money to go.

If you want to keep funding the Federation, you will have that choice. If you would rather see your money go to the U.S. Rice Producers Association that solely represents farmers and has a proven track record of doing what it takes to sell rice out in the countryside where the new markets really are, then you can make that choice, too.

**All we want is a choice.**

If the Federation is doing such a great job, they have nothing to be afraid of.

# Insurance for Members May Be on Horizon

The staff of the Arkansas Rice Growers Association is asking for your help in providing better insurance for its members and supporting the association's mission at the same time. In response to a flood of demands from members, the Arkansas Rice Growers Association is looking into alternatives for members' substantial insurance needs.

"We want to provide more options for our members, many of whom have expressed a strong desire to find alternative insurance providers for their needs," said Greg Yielding, Executive Director.

"When times are tough, you especially want to look at your options. That is even more true if farmers can place their insurance with someone they trust to look out for their best interests and who will be there in case the worst happens."

Yielding added that the staff is requesting every farmer member to submit their total annual farm operation insurance and crop insurance premium costs for the year. Please separate these premium amounts. To express your interest in participating in these exciting new possibilities, please send us the information by March 30. Mail to P.O. Box 95226, North Little Rock, AR 72190 or e-mail to [ARGAinsurance@hotmail.com](mailto:ARGAinsurance@hotmail.com).

## ARGA Board of Directors

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**Arkansas Rice Growers Association**  
Greg Yielding, Executive Director  
P.O. Box 95226  
North Little Rock, AR 72190  
Phone: 501-442-0995, Fax: 501-372-4505  
E-mail: [gyielding@hotmail.com](mailto:gyielding@hotmail.com)  
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**The Arkansas Rice Growers Association is the only organization solely representing the views of the Arkansas rice farmer**

The Arkansas Rice Growers Association is a Proud Affiliate of the US Rice Producers Association.



US Rice Producers Association  
2825 Wilcrest Dr. Suite 505  
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P.O. Box 95226 ♦ North Little Rock, AR 72190  
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### Grower Membership Form

*If you have not yet paid your membership dues, cut this form out and mail it along with a check to the association. If you have joined, recruit another grower and pass along the newsletter.*

GROWER NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
First Last

Farm Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street/P.O. Box City State Zip

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_  
Please provide us with an e-mail address as this will enable the association to keep you informed of very important news in a timely manner. Also in the future we will e-mail the newsletter thus saving your organization printing and postage costs. Your e-mail will never be shared with any outside party.

Fax No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Office/Farm No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Home No.: \_\_\_\_\_

DUES:  BRONZE \$100  
 SILVER \$250  
 GOLD \$500  
 PLATINUM \$1000

Total Dues Amount: \_\_\_\_\_ CK# \_\_\_\_\_

Note: Dues are deductible as a legitimate business expense.

TOTAL NUMBER OF RICE ACRES: \_\_\_\_\_

PRIMARY COUNTY: \_\_\_\_\_

SECONDARY COUNTY: \_\_\_\_\_

**Return this form and your check payable to:**  
ARGA  
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