

Clinton victories re-energize state supporters

By DOUG GROW

Oh what a night. The phone started ringing at the Minnetonka home of Jackie Stevenson about 10 p.m. Tuesday.

"The troops are checking in!," Stevenson said, her voice filled with an excitement that had all but disappeared in the last month.

The troops. Hillary Clinton's Minnesota troops. Alive, and if not totally well, filled with new excitement.

The flurry of phone calls was prompted by the networks' declaration that Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton had won the Democratic Party primary in Ohio.

Suddenly all that had happened before – the 12 straight Clinton losses to Barack Obama, and the lopsided Clinton loss to Obama in the Minnesota caucuses – seemed long ago.

A win in Rhode Island. A huge win in Ohio. Then, Texas.

"For everyone who has stumbled but got back up, this one's for you," Clinton had said after she was declared the winner in Ohio.

Dispirited superdelegate Stevenson bounces back

Stevenson certainly could appreciate that. She'd been way down.

"Our caucus was the lowest point," said Stevenson, a member of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and one of the three Minnesota superdelegates who had stuck with Clinton through loss after loss after loss. "I was the (caucus) site director in Senate District 53B (Minnetonka area). We had 2,313



Courtesy of JACKIE STEVENSON

Minnesota superdelegate Jackie Stevenson, a diehard supporter of Hillary Rodham Clinton, was on hand for the senator's Super Bowl party at Dixie's restaurant in St. Paul. The party followed Clinton's Feb. 3 rally at Augsburg College.

people vote in the presidential preference vote. I was certain we were going to do OK. We'd been out working. We'd been making calls. The things we were hearing were good. And then, it was 2 to 1 for him."

Nothing that has happened since Feb. 5 had given Stevenson much hope. To make matters worse, as a superdelegate, she was being pushed hard by Obama supporters to drop Clinton and come out for Obama.

But the harder Obama supporters pushed her, the feistier she got. If there was going to be just one Hillary Clinton vote at the Demo-

cratic National Convention, it was going to be Jackie Stevenson's.

She is 73 years old. She's dealing with back problems. But nothing was going to stop her from fighting to see her dream come true: A woman as president. Now the fight has been joined.

"I saw one poll showing that women got behind her in Ohio," Stevenson said. "Maybe they finally got the message."

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Obama's broad appeal

Jane Freeman, an octogenarian former first lady of Minnesota, and Ralph Remington, an African American serving a first term on the Minneapolis City Council, couldn't look more different in person and on paper. But they're both backing Obama, which says something about his broad appeal, which is still worth examining even after last night's primary results, **page 5**

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MINNPOST.WORLD

Iran sanctions only go so far

By DOUG STONE

The U.N. Security Council's vote Monday to impose more sanctions on Iran will not solve the nuclear problem anytime soon even though it demonstrated international agreement that Iran has not been forthright about its weapons plans.

At best, the sanctions, the third set imposed by the Security Council in three years, will push the U.S. and Iran toward negotiations, according to several commentators. Time magazine's Tony Karon quotes former U.S. Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns, the Bush administration's "point man" on Iran, as saying that the standoff between Iran and the U.S. and the West will have to be solved by the next president:

"I think this is going to be a drama that plays out well into 2009 and beyond," Burns told the Council on Foreign Relations last week. He added, "There's plenty of room for this type of diplomacy, both sanctions as well as the positive offers of negotiations. That will continue, I'm quite sure, into the next Administration."

Karon writes that "the sanctions agreed upon on Monday may really form part of a holding pattern, in which sanctions are maintained in support of Security Council demands, but not significantly escalated. After all, next January, a new U.S. Administration assumes office, and the following summer, Iranians vote in a presidential election in which Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is far from certain to be reelected. And there's a greater likelihood that a fresh cast of characters in both Washington and Tehran might be better able to make headway in negotiating over a range of issues of tension between the two powers than are the current incumbents."

A rundown of the bans

The Security Council voted 14-0 with one abstention to impose travel bans on Iranian officials involved in the nuclear program, to freeze assets of cer-



HERWIG PRAMMER, Reuters

U.S. Ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Gregory Schulte, left, talks to Russian IAEA Ambassador Grigory Berdennikov at the beginning of a board of governors meeting in Vienna yesterday. The U.N. Security Council voted on Monday to impose more sanctions against Iran over its nuclear program, including travel bans and asset freezes against named individuals and calls for vigilance over banks in Iran.

tain companies and to ban sale of "dual-use" items which have nuclear and other applications. The resolution calls on governments to withdraw financial backing from companies trading with Iran, to inspect cargo into and out of the country, and monitor activities of two Iranian banks.

Even Russia and China, which trade extensively with Iran and have been reluctant to pressure the country, voted for the sanctions aimed at forcing Iran to stop its uranium enrichment program. The U.S. and allies insist the enrichment program is designed to develop nuclear weapons while Iran contends it is for peaceful energy purposes.

The sanctions vote was a far cry from the situation a few months ago, write Robin Wright and Colum Lynch in the Los Angeles Times: "Just five months after President Bush warned that Iran's alleged pursuit of nuclear weapons could lead to 'World War III,' the White House had to settle for a watered-down U.N. resolution that makes most trade and financial sanctions voluntary," they report.

"U.S. diplomacy was undercut by China's growing oil trade with Iran, Russia's ties to Tehran's nuclear energy program and skept-

icism among four developing countries on the council about the need for yet another U.N. resolution. But Washington's own National Intelligence Estimate in December — which concluded with 'high confidence' that Iran had shelved its nuclear weapons program in 2003 — did more than anything else to undermine the prospects for a hard-hitting resolution, according to current and former U.S. officials."

In a background piece just before the U.N. vote, William J. Broad and David Sanger explained in The New York Times that the Intelligence Estimate's conclusion was based on weapons design, not uranium enrichment. "Based on fresh intelligence that Iran's bomb design program was suspended in 2003, it said Iran was not pursuing nuclear weapons, even though uranium enrichment continued."

But "for years, Washington had based its assessment that Iran was pursuing nuclear weapons largely on its steady work to enrich uranium, which could be used for bombs but which Iran says it wants to fuel nuclear power reactors," The Times said. "Forcing Iran to give up enrichment became the goal."

Questions continue

Despite the National Intelligence Estimate, questions about Iran's nuclear intentions continued to be raised, particularly last month in Vienna where the U.N.'s chief nuclear inspector introduced new documents and a video that "disclosed many new details suggesting the depths of Iran's past work on weapon design," The Times said.

The Vienna meeting lent support to Monday's Security Council vote.

Even with Monday's successful vote, "U.S. policy toward Iran is stuck. It is more a holding game than a policy," write William Luters, Thomas Pickering and James Walsh in the International Herald Tribune. "Continuing to try to sanction Iran has made life difficult for some Iranians but will not coerce Iran to change its commitment to a nuclear program."

The three propose that "Iran's efforts to produce enriched uranium and related nuclear activities be conducted on a multilateral basis, jointly managed and operated on Iranian soil by a consortium including Iran and other governments." The system would be controlled by "a rigorous and broad monitoring regime over Iran's nuclear program. ... This approach would reduce the risk of proliferation and create the basis for a broader discussion of our serious disagreements and of our common interests."

These and other approaches probably will have to wait until regimes change in Washington and Tehran.

Read the complete story at www.minnpost.com.

Doug Stone is director of college relations at Macalester College in St. Paul and a former reporter for the Minneapolis Tribune and assistant news director at WCCO-TV. The views in this article are not those of Macalester College.

Steve Sviggum on how to lay the lash – in private



ROBERT WHEREATT

There was strong reaction last week to the torn flesh and spilled blood when House Minority Leader Marty Seifert tied six fellow Republicans to the public mast, and lashed them for voting to override Republican Gov. Tim Pawlenty's veto of the transportation funding bill. But few have held that lash and had to make that decision.

Former House Speaker and former Minority Leader Steve Sviggum has. You have to lay on the lash, in Sviggum's view, but he disagrees with how Seifert did it.

"To empower the governor and a minority [caucus], you have to be able to support the governor's vetoes or you become powerless in the system," said Sviggum, now Pawlenty's commissioner for the Department of Labor and Industry. "You have to empower each other."

Sviggum, a House member for 29 years until he stepped down last year to take over the department, likened it to the rare occasion when one of his three children acted up during church service. "We didn't spank them in the sanctuary," the Lutheran father said. But there was a subsequent meeting of hand and bottom.

Last week, the six rogue Republicans voted with every House DFLer to override Pawlenty's veto of a \$6.6 billion transportation-funding bill that eventually hikes the state gas tax 8.5 cents, raises license tab fees

on most vehicles and, in the seven-county metro area, jacks up the sales tax a quarter of a cent. The six Republicans said they were voting what was best for their districts.

Privately, not publicly

Seifert, perturbed, stripped them of their caucus leadership positions. The action made headlines and talk shows and, in the eyes of some Minnesotans, made true democrats of the six who defied their governor and their minority leader.

"It probably wasn't the right thing to do," said Sviggum, who gave his views to MinnPost cautiously, concerned that he might appear to be a Monday morning whiner.

"I don't want to come off like I'm advising people who don't need my advice. Unfortunately, from my perspective, the wrong issue became the story.

"It would have been better to do something privately than publicly. The focus becomes the Republicans," he said. The focus should have been the DFLers and the various tax increases embedded in the bill, according to Sviggum.

Sviggum, who has experience in such matters, said he would have waited to discipline them. He would have left them off conference committees, denied their private requests for appointment to commissions, not approved their requests to take trips or attend forums at public expense. In other words, he wouldn't have done it in the sanc-

tuary but he would have done it.

Not one bill overridden

He did, he said. The discipline and the implied threat of discipline paid off. Republican Gov. Arne Carlson vetoed more than 100 bills, and not one of them was overridden despite more than a dozen attempts. "It wasn't because our caucus members liked Arne so well. But you had to empower the governor."

Sviggum recalled in 1996 he was the minority leader of a caucus of 46. It takes 45 votes in the House to sustain a veto. When a DFL override attempt was announced on the House floor, he asked for a recess. His caucus trooped into a room, and behind closed doors, he told his colleagues they couldn't leave until he had 45 signatures on a sheet of paper. "A little over two hours later we had the names," he said.

Last week, the six said they were voting in the best interests of their districts, and voting their consciences.

That is the moral high ground, Sviggum acknowledged. You can't say voting your district is wrong or that caucus loyalty trumps conscience, but that presumes everyone in those six districts — or at least a majority — favored the funding bill. It also presumes every House DFLer voted the preferences of voters in his or her district. "I would

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– Steve Sviggum, former house speaker and former minority leader

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Joel Kramer, CEO and editor

Clinton victories re-energize state supporters

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A telephone conversation with former Minnesota Sen. Mark Dayton late Tuesday night, suggests that the fight isn't going to just be in upcoming primary and caucus states.

There were hints in Dayton's call that the Clinton campaign will demand close scrutiny over what happened in the second part of Texas' strange selection process, the post-primary caucus. <http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/politics/national/stories/030508dnpoldemanalysis.40531ec.html>

Dayton, who had sat next to Clinton during his term in the Senate, had taken a flight to Dallas late Monday night to do whatever he could to help his friend. In the morning, he'd held a sign on an overpass during a rush hour turned frenetic because of icy roads.

"Black ice," said Dayton. "It was so bad on the roads it looked like Carol Molnau was in charge."

Later in the day, Dayton had made get-out-the-vote phone calls for Clinton. Then, he'd been a poll watcher. And finally, he'd been an observer at one of those post-primary caucuses that are to produce one third of Texas' convention delegates.

He didn't know whether to laugh or cry at what he saw.

"Total chaos," he said of the caucus he watched. "Nobody knew what was going on. In the caucus I was watching, it was about 50 percent Hispanic, 40 percent African-American and 10 percent white. At one point, they decided that about 100 of the people in the room were in

the wrong place, so they just went home. It was a mess."

A bigger mess than Minnesota's caucuses had been?

Texas caucus mess far worse than Minnesota's

"On a 10-point scale, Minnesota was a 9, Iowa was a 5 and Texas was a minus 5," said Dayton. "It was the most incompetently run thing you could imagine."

Given what other Clinton supporters have been suggesting about the caucus portion of the Texas two-step, the Clinton campaign could be on the verge of starting a backroom brawl over how Texas delegates get divvied up even as the contestants move on in the drama without end.

But, of course, the big news was that Clinton had won the primary in Texas and, earlier in the evening, in Ohio.

Rick Stafford, like Stevenson, a member of the DNC, a super-delegate and a leader of Clinton's Minnesota campaign, was pleased, though not gushing, over what happened Tuesday night.

"It's like the championship football game," said Stafford. "We just played the third quarter and Obama got a field goal and she got three touchdowns, and we're going to the fourth quarter. I'm delighted that she proved the pundits wrong. I'm delighted that she showed all those people who were telling her that she should wrap it up and get out of the campaign how wrong they were."

But above all things, Stafford, a former DFL party chairman, is a man who understands political numbers.

"She still has big problems with delegate math," said Stafford.

Stafford's big concern is for

the party. If the voters in the remaining primaries and caucuses can't get this sorted out by convention time, or if Obama and Clinton start attacking each other too hard, he fears the party could be the loser in November.

"We can't let that happen," he said.

Stafford hoping for 'do-overs' in Michigan, Florida

Stafford said he has been making calls to others in the DNC, including some who he hopes have access to party chairman Howard Dean, about arranging do-over primaries in Michigan and Florida. The Democratic parties of those two states, of course, jumped their primaries up in the calendar, against orders from the national party. As punishment, the national party declared those states could not be seated at the national convention.

Clinton won in both Michigan and Florida, though no candidates campaigned before those events.

"She (Clinton) thinks those delegations should be seated," said Stafford. "But I don't think you can just do that. On the other hand, I don't see how you can just have a convention without Michigan and Florida. I think the only option is setting up do-overs, maybe after the Pennsylvania primary."

Pleased as he was about Clinton's wins, he knows her successes only make things more complicated.

"We're standing on a delicate line," Stafford continued. "We are involved in one of those incredible campaigns that's about generational change and about class. What we have to be careful of is not turning away the

new people who have become involved."

So Stafford was a man of many feelings Tuesday night. Concerned. Pleased. And a little surprised.

In a conversation on the day before the primary, Stafford had found himself talking wistfully about what had gone wrong with the Clinton campaign. After all, she once had been the commanding leader.

"Keeping Bill Clinton out of South Carolina would have been a big help," Stafford had said. "I also think it was a big mistake to simply dismiss all the smaller caucuses states. It's all a little disappointing. There was this wonderful chance for a woman to truly break the glass ceiling. But I know if Obama wins, that's a huge barrier broken, too."

"Will gays ever break the barrier?" I'd ask Stafford, who is gay. "Will we ever have a gay president?"

"We've probably already had one," he replied, laughing.

Then, he'd turned serious again.

"I just thought she'd be a great president," he had said Monday, as if that was no longer possible.

But then came Rhode Island, Ohio, Texas.

Oh what a night. Clinton's back, and her troops are checking in.

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— Rick Stafford, leader of Clinton's Minnesota campaign

Explaining the Obama phenomenon

By G.R. ANDERSON JR.

Barack Obama's Feb. 2 rally at the Target Center was remarkable for the obvious reasons – 20,000 people from all walks of life waiting for hours to hear a political speech, the electrifying oratory itself, and the eventual trouncing of Hillary Clinton by Obama in the Minnesota caucuses three days later.

But it was notable in a more subtle way as well, in that Jane Freeman was one of the people who introduced Obama before he spoke. To the public, Freeman may be forgotten by now, but her endorsement of any candidate can make waves in DFL circles.

She was the first lady of Minnesota at the end of the 1950s, when her husband, the late Orville Freeman, was governor. In 1961, the couple moved to Washington, D.C., while Orville served as secretary of agriculture under Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson.

Though she'll be 87 years old in May, Freeman is still engaged behind the scenes in local and national politics, sometimes being named an honorary chair in various campaigns. And there she was a month ago, eagerly telling the Target Center crowd how she came around to Obama.

"Two years ago at the Humphrey Day dinner, I heard the junior senator from Illinois speak," Freeman said of Obama appearing at an annual political tribute to the late Hubert. She recounted that because of his "straight talking and careful thinking" she bought and devoured Obama's two books. The whole experience, she said, "thrilled me."

So even with Tuesday's results, which can be spun either that Hillary Clinton triumphed or that Obama hung in there in a state where just weeks ago he was far behind, there's still a movement afoot around Barack Obama. The senator, even if he doesn't win the Democratic nomination or go on to the general election, has roused something among voters that few, if any, saw coming.

No one is going to argue that the endorsement of a white octo-

genarian with firsthand knowledge of the far ago days of Camelot makes Obama's candidacy a slam dunk, last night's results in Texas, Ohio, Vermont and Rhode Island notwithstanding. But it does dispel one notion from this campaign season: That all elderly women are in Hillary's camp.

More importantly, when contrasted with other Obama supporters, Freeman's backing takes on a salient status: While it's obvious that the once-underdog-now-frontrunner is no niche candidate, he's still capable of gaining even broader support that could very well carry him to the Oval Office, if he can get past what is now a street fight with Hillary Clinton.

Take another prominent local Obama backer, Ralph Remington. Remington, roughly half Freeman's age, is an African-American, originally from Philadelphia, who is serving his first term on the Minneapolis City Council. Not a shock that he'd get behind Barack, but Remington canvassed for the senator in Iowa, where he found rural, white Iowans pondering and accepting the notion of a black president.

At least by appearance and on paper, Remington and Freeman couldn't come from more disparate backgrounds. But they are united in their belief in Obama.

"If Obama didn't pass the smell test, I wouldn't be behind him just because he's black," Remington noted Monday, saying that he didn't exactly warm to Al Sharpton last election cycle.

"I became increasingly worried last fall about the election," Freeman said, also on Monday. "I thought, I gotta help this young man do it."

A mayor's early backing

The list of Minnesota DFLers supporting Obama is long and impressive, especially as the campaign grinds on. But one notable early bandwagon jumper, a man who according to Obama's own telling told the senator he should run for president, is Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak.

Rybak's early enthusiasm is telling. Much has been made about Obama's ascendancy signaling a

"post-racial" era in American politics, but Remington doesn't quite see it that way. Instead, it signals a change in the black candidates.

"He's the Jackie Robinson of racial politics, a palatable black man," Remington surmised. "He's got that Sidney Poitier grace and élan."

More importantly, Remington sees the Obama phenomenon ("Obama-non," anyone?) as a much grander extension of the politics that ushered Remington into office representing the predominantly white 10th Ward in Minneapolis, the land of Lake Calhoun and Uptown. He further points to Keith Ellison's win last year in the state's 5th Congressional District. (Remington also noted the election of Cory Booker, another new-school black, as mayor of Newark.)

"It's not something that happens overnight, but it started to happen on a local level," Remington said. "My race, Keith Ellison's race, they were not race-based. But there was a largely white electorate who had never voted for a black before or any person of color. Not because we were so great, but because we were plugged into the politics of the age."

The politics of the age are likely quite messy, but Remington noted that "change" is not just an empty verbal tic when it comes to the age of Obama. "We're all products of a new society," Remington said, continuing on his and Ellison's victory, as well as Obama's candidacy. "We blacks can drink latte and eat sushi and drive Volvos or Camrys or whatever."

If the Obama success makes sense to Remington, it's no less astonishing in many regards. "I was born and raised in North Carolina, and this is nothing short of remarkable to see this in my lifetime," Freeman said. "He's not doing that old song and dance about fighting for our rights and compensation that Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton did. No sir. Barack is all about looking at what we all have to do together."

Though that contrast has to do with Obama's natural demeanor, it's also quite effective as a strategy, as Remington surely agrees.

Acutely aware of sounding like a black elite, Remington pointed out the paths that Jackson and others blazed on the post-civil-rights front, but that Obama--"a viable African-American candidate"--goes a long way toward fighting the polarization so many politicians of any color have used on race issues.

"He's not going to get in your face at a cocktail party and make you feel all guilty," Remington said, chuckling. "I might."

Beyond politics as usual

Democrats are fond of saying they'll be happy with whoever gets their party's nomination this year, but make no mistake: Obama's supporters want their man to win in a way that goes beyond the realm of politics as usual.

That's not to say there isn't some ambivalence. Remington said he admires Clinton. "Hillary had too much baggage," he said, sounding a familiar refrain. "I used to love Hillary. The Clinton age was another age, and that has passed."

The thought of another go-round with the Clintons weighs heavily on many minds, perhaps none more so than Jane Freeman's. Freeman recalls her first encounter with Clinton, when Clinton was first lady, at another Humphrey Day dinner years ago, and she came away extremely impressed, and even befriended Clinton.

"I am so disappointed in Hillary's campaign," Freeman said, pointing out her distaste for and distrust of Terry McAuliffe, the former head of the Democratic National committee who has a prominent role in the Clinton campaign. "It's the same old retreats. Running a campaign nowadays, you have to have current and future generations. I haven't seen one new face with her, not a one. They're going to fight the same old battles."

Read the complete story at www.minnpost.com.

G.R. Anderson Jr., a former reporter and editor for City Pages, covers politics, the state Capitol and issues related to public safety.

COMMUNITY VOICES

Minnesota should move boldly toward greener biofuels

By DON ARNOSTI

Last week, \$100-a-barrel oil hit the nation harder than another Minnesota subzero day. The timing couldn't have been worse for our limping economy. Fortunately, Minnesota has a chance to break away from \$100-a-barrel oil toward greener fuel and energy — in a way that creates jobs, protects the environment, slows climate change, and establishes the state as a national and international leader.

Twenty-five years ago, Minnesota helped pioneer corn-based ethanol in what has become known as the "Minnesota Model." Incentives for ethanol production and assistance to farmer-owned facilities helped assure that economic benefits stayed in Minnesota's rural communities. The original Minnesota Model was essentially an economic-development plan designed to take advantage of low-priced corn. It achieved that goal and then some.

But much has changed in agriculture and energy over the last 25 years, and corn-based ethanol is rapidly reaching its environmental limits. Farmers in Minnesota and other corn-belt states are plowing up land that used to be protected under the federal Conservation Reserve Program to take advantage of record-high corn prices. Corn production is expanding into what had been hay, pasture and marginal farmland. And increased corn production is increasing our use of fossil fuels, through more diesel fuel, fertilizer and pesticides — which, in turn, is increasing

pollution in our rivers, lakes and waterways.

It's time for a Minnesota Model 2.0 to move us from corn-based ethanol toward biofuels made from feedstocks that expand economic development and support the environment. The need to make a transition away from corn-based ethanol is nearly universally recognized. Last year, Congress passed a new renewable fuel standard that requires the United States to use 5.5 billion gallons of non-corn-based biofuel by 2015, and 21 billion gallons by 2022.

Next generation: native grasses

The race to meet this emerging market is on, and Minnesota is at the forefront. Researchers at the University of Minnesota have identified native perennial grasses as the next generation feedstock that has the most potential for both economic and environmental benefits. These native perennial energy grasses can substitute for natural gas and coal in energy production today, while helping replace oil tomorrow as the cellulosic ethanol industry emerges. The advantages of shifting to native grasses as a feedstock are many. Native grasses and other perennials need only to be planted once. After establishment they minimize the need for fossil-fuel-based diesel use, pesticides and fertilizer. Perennial grasses have deep root systems that lock large quantities of carbon in the soil, reducing our global-warming footprint. Perennials require less water than most commodity

crops, and provide permanent cover to reduce nutrient and chemical runoff and soil erosion into our lakes and rivers. And finally, just as they did when they were part of the prairie, they provide habitat for nesting birds and other wildlife.

Biomass from native grasses is already used to help power an electricity plant in Iowa. The Chippewa Valley Ethanol Cooperative in Benson, Minn., is constructing a biomass energy system that will use perennial grasses and agricultural byproducts to ultimately replace its natural gas needs. Other ethanol plants are looking to do the same.

The problem is we don't grow enough energy grasses to make the transition. Farmers are jumping at historic high prices for corn, soybeans and wheat — and who can blame them? To get farmers to shift toward native grasses, and help establish and grow that market, it's going to take government incentives.

Fortunately, Minnesota already has the Reinvest in Minnesota Clean Energy program, designed specifically to help spur these changes. Passed by the Minnesota Legislature in 2007, this program offers farmers near ethanol facilities and other energy markets payments for growing native, perennial crops for energy in ways that promote better water quality, wildlife habitat, and carbon sequestration. Farmers will receive an upfront payment from the state for meeting these environmental requirements, while the energy market will pay for the biomass.

Too little funding in the works

Authorized in 2007, the program has yet to be funded. The original funding request to make this program viable was \$46 million. Unfortunately, the Minnesota House has voted to not give any money to the program, and the state Senate and the governor each proposed only \$3.3 million — essentially for a single small demonstration project. While this funding is crucial for establishing the program, to make a real difference on the landscape we need multiple larger-scale pilot projects to work with farmers, ethanol plants and energy facilities simultaneously.

A fully funded RIM Clean Energy program is supported by a remarkable array of organizations, including the Minnesota Farm Bureau and the Minnesota Farmers Union, the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society, and the Minnesota Waterfowl Association and Pheasants Forever. This broad support illustrates the balance this program strikes between environmental, energy and economic objectives.

If Minnesota wants to become a regional and national leader on the next generation of bioenergy crops, a small pilot project won't cut it. Oil at \$100 a barrel tells us we need to be bolder.

Don Arnosti is the director of the forestry program at the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, a coalition partner of Clean Energy Minnesota.

Want to add your voice?

If you're interested in joining the discussion by writing a Community Voices article, email Susan Albright at salbright@minnpost.com.