

Helfrick Says Budget Failed To Stress Agriculture

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — The governor's budget address promised little for the state's number one industry, according to senator Edward Helfrick (R-27).

Helfrick said the governor stressed past budget successes in the area of agriculture, rather than offering any substantial support for the future.

"The governor said that funding for agriculture has been increased over the past four years," said Helfrick. "But I didn't hear anything about greater funding efforts for this year in the areas of agricultural promotion and research."

Instead, the line item for agricultural promotion in the proposed General Fund is actually reduced from \$590,000 to \$500,000 in 1990-91. Line items for mushroom promotion and apple marketing are eliminated, and funding for the Milk Marketing Board is cut by \$40,000. The agricultural research line item is also reduced from \$3,000,000 to \$2,500,000.

"This is the same funding level that the governor asked for last year," said Helfrick, referring to agricultural research. "But Senate and House Republicans successfully rallied for more."

The senator noted that many of the funding increases in last year's budget were the result of support by Senate and House Republicans.

Helfrick added that the governor has failed to spend 77 percent of the money set aside for agricultural promotion in the 1989-90 state budget.

"Agriculture is the state's biggest industry," said Helfrick. "If

we want to see economic growth, we have to make an investment in the future of our farms."

All in all, Helfrick expressed

disappointment with the governor's failure to stress agriculture in his message, mentioning it only briefly at the end of the address.

"When he did talk about agriculture, Governor Casey highlighted increased funding for a plan to replace the roof of the

Farm Show Building in Harrisburg," said Helfrick. "Money was set aside for that purpose last year, and it wasn't spent. What will happen in the coming year?"

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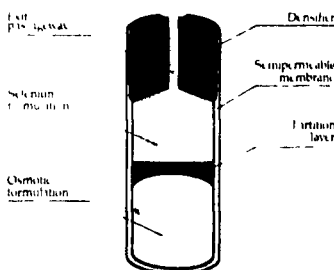
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