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CLARION - Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, called it "a fantasy lawsuit."

"It" is the Des Moines Waters Works' suit against three Iowa counties for having excessive nitrates from farm tile. That water flows into surface waters that serve as the source for drinking water for Des Moines.

Article Photos



-Farm News photo by Kriss Nelson

U.S. SEN. CHARLES GRASSLEY took some time away from Washington, D.C., during a holiday break to meet with constituents through face-to-face visits and town hall meetings like the one held Monday at Hagie Manufacturing in Clarion.

Grassley's comments were made Monday during a meeting at Hagie Manufacturing in Clarion, taking advantage of Easter break from Washington D.C. to meet constituents through face-to-face visits and town hall meetings.

He also addressed inheritance tax reform, corporate taxation, the strength of the American dollar, creating a national budget and increasing debt loads by Iowa college students.

DMWW is suing three northwestern Iowa counties - Buena Vista, Sac and Calhoun - over nitrates that have made their way into the Raccoon River.

Des Moines gets its water from the Raccoon and Des Moines rivers.

"That's a fantasy lawsuit," Grassley said. "They will have to come to the conclusion farmers are directly responsible for the pollution, and that we know when it's going to rain 9 or 10 inches."

He said there are non-point and point source pollution. In order for the lawsuit to be successful, DMWW must prove that water running out of tile lines is in fact a point source pollution.

And as far as that goes, he said, tile lines have been running for several decades, and "you can't change history," Grassley said.

Other issues

Grassley said his top goal is getting a constitutional amendment requiring an annual federal balanced budget.

"It would keep us from getting deeper in the hole," he said, "and maybe eventually out of it."

The third week in March is the traditional budget week. He said a budget was passed in Congress that balances , whereas the president's budget doesn't.

A budget, Grassley aid, puts limits on what can be appropriated by the president later.

"A budget brings discipline so no one exceeds it," he said.

Short of a major natural disaster, emergency funding, he said, is the only addition to a budget that would not require a majority vote.

Corporate income tax law in the United States, Grassley said, is different than in other countries. He said he would like to see that become more uniform.

"Corporate income isn't taxed until it comes home," Grassley said, "where in other countries, it is taxed where it is earned.

"I would prefer territorial taxation, that would put us on an even playing field, but if we can't do that, I would like to see it put on an average."

Grassley said there is little Congress can do to help increase the value of the American dollar, but did say it is important for to ensure the dollar is part of free trade agreements.

Concerning inheritance tax reform, Grassley said, "In 2005 or 2006 we missed the opportunity to do away with estate taxes, but we are still working to try to keep the issue alive.

"With the inflation of farmland, you are taking phantom income and the principle of taxes is to tax income once, not three or four times afterward."

Debt loads of college students are increasing, Grassley said. Students borrowing too much money to attend a college or a university.

"Debt is becoming a very big problem nationwide, and students should be told what they need to borrow to get a degree, not be told all that they can borrow," he said.

For instance, he said, students at an Iowa university are borrowing upward of \$31,000 when just to get their degree should only need to borrow \$15,000 to \$16,000.

He said he would like to see a bill passed to help control that issue, but admits it would be hard to regulate.

Toured plant

Grassley said he was impressed with Hagie Manufacturing and learned that Hagie is a leader of exports for the state of Iowa, compared to many larger companies.

He said he was also surprised to learn that the majority of Hagie products made manufactured in Clarion.

"I am glad to know you actually have people that want to work here," said Grassley. "A lot of manufacturers need qualified people and that is something we need to work on."

Grassley said he enjoys meeting Iowans where they work and live.

"When I am on break, I take the opportunity to do town meetings. It gives you the opportunity to ask questions. We need to know what our constituents are doing."

Some of his most meaningful moments, he said, are when families who to adopt children with his assistance introduce him to their new family member.

"I enjoy representing the people of Iowa," he said. "Having them come up and say thank you, it makes it all worth it."

Read the full editorial from Farm News at:

<http://www.farm-news.com/page/content.detail/id/520954/DMWW-has--fantasy-lawsuit-.html?nav=5005>