

# Harry L. Pearson

## Hartford City, Indiana

July 20, 2008

Dear Farm Bureau Members and Friends:

Nels Ackerson is a man of sound Hoosier values, integrity and courage. He listens, works hard, and gets things done. In a time when those qualities are unusual in Washington, Nels has them in abundance. We need him in Congress, and that's why I'm writing.

Nels doesn't shrink from a challenge. In fighting for what is right, he is willing to take on any adversary, no matter how powerful. I've known that about Nels for more than 30 years, including work he's done for the past 16 years for Farm Bureau members and others to defend our property rights.

Leadership is not new for Nels. He was Indiana State FFA President, National FFA President, and Purdue Student Body President. He was named Purdue's outstanding graduating man in the School of Agriculture and in the entire University. Two years ago Purdue awarded Nels an honorary doctorate for his contributions in many areas.

After Purdue, Nels went to Harvard Law School on a full scholarship. He began his legal career in 1971 and has been an active member of the Indiana bar since that time. Early in his career, Nels took a senior staff position for the United States Senate, and from that position he proposed legislation that was adopted on a bipartisan basis on agricultural policy, energy policy, incentives for new technology, and constitutional issues.

In the 1980s Nels began an international law practice, opened the first American law office in Egypt, helped start the American Chambers of Commerce in Egypt, and was elected its president. He has represented clients in 16 countries on four continents and participated in U.S. trade missions to open new markets for America. Also in the 1980s and 1990s, Nels represented half of the banks in the Farm Credit System during its crisis. He helped bring all sides together for a congressional solution that saved the System.

Most important to many of us, though, is what Nels has done in recent years when he has turned his attention to protecting property rights of farmers, ranchers, homeowners, small businesses, and the Farm Bureau.

Many of you know that Nels has had great success for landowners against multinational telecommunications companies, railroads, utilities and the federal government who have tried to take their land. He has made Indiana the national leader in property rights. Nels has stood side by side with the Indiana Farm Bureau, and he also has now represented landowners in more than 40 other states, including fifteen other state Farm Bureaus.

What you may not know is the price that Nels had to pay for our property rights victories. His first property rights cases were for neighbors of his family farm near Eagletown. They could not afford to pay tens of thousands of dollars or more in legal fees to fight some of the largest corporations in the world. The property rights abuses they faced were part of a nationwide pattern. Nels decided the only way to stop the abuse was to file class actions on behalf of all landowners who were affected. He took the cases on a contingency fee basis.

After the first cases were filed, Nels overheard some of his adversaries boast that Nels didn't "have the horses" to fight so many well-funded corporations who would be able to run up costs and delay recoveries for enough years to drive him out of business or force him to quit. At times Nels had as many as twenty

lawyers plus other staff working on these cases. Costs mounted for Nels and his wife, Sharon. To meet payroll, they put a second and third mortgage on their home, mortgaged their family farm, maxed out their personal credit cards, and finally sold Sharon's car.

Nels didn't quit. He and Sharon had faith and were determined to keep fighting for what was right. I learned only years later how close Nels and his family came to financial collapse. During this time, we in the Indiana Farm Bureau told the American Farm Bureau Federation about Nels' successes in making new law that would benefit farmers and other landowners for generations. Together with AFBF and other state Farm Bureaus we encouraged Nels to keep taking cases, and we agreed to contribute to ongoing costs.

It turned out that our help kept the litigation alive. Since that time, Nels has achieved many more property rights victories. Finally some defendants were pressed to settle. Tens of thousands of Hoosiers and hundreds of thousands of others across the nation now have had their title cleared, and many have received checks for what was taken, all because Nels stood up for them and didn't back down.

After his clients were assured of success, Nels petitioned the courts for attorneys fees to be paid by the defendants, not by the landowners, for the years of legal work. Finally, Nels started getting paid. I understand the mortgage on his farm and the third mortgage on his house have been released. He's still not out of the woods, but if his remaining cases finally settle, Nels will be compensated for his years of work and sacrifice.

In today's political climate there may be people who will try to lump Nels together with unscrupulous lawyers who have been accused of filing frivolous lawsuits or lining their pockets without getting real benefits for their clients. That is not at all what Nels has done, and I want all of us to be sure the facts are known. Nels has shown that protecting legal rights is still is a noble calling. As one of our county presidents recently said, "Nels is a Farm Bureau hero."

I ask you to support Nels in his campaign for Congress. He has stood up for us, and I think it's time that we stand up for him. Nels grew up in Farm Bureau. He knows us. He shares our values. He knows Indiana agriculture. He attends state, district and county Farm Bureau meetings. He will listen to us. He will respond to us and represent us with a new level of energy, insight and focus. Nels will be one of only six out of 435 members of the U.S. House of Representatives with a degree in agriculture. We need Nels' knowledge and commitment to agriculture.

Nels is running a bipartisan campaign. He will reach across party lines, bring people together and get results. The incumbent congressman has served in Congress for 16 years. Indiana Farm Bureau has supported him in the past. But there comes a time for change. I am confident Nels will be more attentive to our needs, more responsive to us, and more effective in getting results.

Please give Nels your support. I'm sure he'll continue to give us his full measure of energy and dedication.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Harry".

Harry L. Pearson  
Past President, Indiana Farm Bureau