

For Immediate Release

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BLUEBERRY INDUSTRY CONDUCTS ELECTION OF STATE COUNCIL MEMBERS FOR U.S. Highbush BLUEBERRY COUNCIL

March 8, 2010- Members of the cultivated blueberry industry are being asked to select representatives to fill state council member and alternate positions on the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council (USHBC) Blueberry Promotion, Research and Information Order. Voting begins April 26, 2010 and continues for a five week voting period. Voters are being asked to complete their ballot and send it back to the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council (USHBC) to be received no later than by close of business on May 31, 2010.

The USHBC is mailing ballots to blueberry growers in Michigan who received nomination applications earlier this year. Ballots will also be posted on the USHBC website at www.blueberry.org. Those who do not receive a ballot by April 26, 2010 can obtain a copy by contacting the USHBC office at (916) 983-0111 (phone) or (916) 983-9022 (fax).

Votes are being cast for 6 state council member positions. Growers in the state of Michigan will vote for their representative. Election of council members and alternates for New Jersey, Oregon, Washington, North Carolina and Georgia will be handled by their individual state blueberry councils and commissions.

Eligible voters are those who produced 2,000 pounds or more of cultivated blueberries in the United States during the period of January 1, 2009 to December 31, 2009. Nominations for state member from Michigan were conducted from January 11 to February 15, 2010. Candidates identified during this nomination process are listed on the final Michigan ballot. Space is also made available on the ballot for write-in candidates.

Those receiving the most votes for each producer seat will be recommended to the Secretary of Agriculture as council members. Those who earn the second most votes for each position will be recommended as the alternate. Those who receive the third and fourth most votes will also be reported to the Secretary of Agriculture for consideration. Council members and alternates will serve for a term of three years starting in 2011 and will be allowed to serve a maximum of two consecutive terms.

The USHBC has adopted a diversity outreach plan to attempt to achieve a diverse representation on the Council. USHBC programs are open to all individuals without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, genetic information,

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parental status and marital or family status. It is USHBC policy that membership on the Council and its committees reflect the diversity of individuals served by its programs.

To accomplish this objective, the USHBC will strive to attain representation of growers and other industry participants from diverse backgrounds on the Council and USHBC committees. To this end, the USHBC strongly encourages women, minorities and persons with disabilities to seek nominations to the USHBC and to participate in Council and USHBC committee activities.

Producers and importers of cultivated blueberries approved the establishment of the national promotion program through a referendum conducted by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service in 2000. In this initial referendum, 67.8 percent of those who voted favored implementation of the order. Those who voted in favor represented 73.2 percent of the volume of cultivated blueberries represented in the referendum. In a continuation referendum held in 2006 the USHBC received another positive endorsement from the industry with 86.9 percent of those who voted favoring continuation. Those voting in favor represented 93.9 percent of the volume of cultivated blueberries represented in the referendum.

The program is funded by an assessment of \$12 per ton on domestic cultivated blueberries and \$12 per ton on fresh or processed imported cultivated blueberries starting in 2001. Market promotion activities funded through the USHBC program began in January of 2002.