



National Conference on Weights and Measures  
"That Equity May Prevail"

## 2011 New Chairman's Address

**Kurt Floren | LA County Agricultural Commissioner / Weights and Measures**

It is truly my honor to be entrusted with the role of Chairman of the National Conference on Weights and Measures. I'll admit, those words sound a bit odd to me as, with amazement, I think back twenty-six years, to 1985, when I first entered the field of Weights and Measures regulation as a new inspector, quickly finding that I did not have a clue of the vast array of issues that this work encompasses. I knew that gas pumps and grocery scales were regularly tested, but, as fuel quality standards, scanner accuracy, package inspection, weighmaster enforcement, and all the, then, "new technology" of load cells and interfaced software programs came into view, I began to realize the immense diversity of this field and came to recognize the fact that Weights and Measures issues touch every consumer dozens, perhaps hundreds of times each day.

Since then, I have been blessed with opportunities to experience a broad array of weights and measures activities, from all manner of device, package, and label inspections to involvement in many major investigations involving overcharges through price scanners, multi-million dollar cases regarding underweight packaged goods, investigation of gas station operators defrauding consumers through electronic manipulation of fuel dispensers, and a host of other matters. My fascination with what we do has only grown.

Through my early years, as a field inspector and, later, as a young supervisor, I would receive my new Handbooks 44, 130, and 133, reading all of the amendments and, at times, wondering, "Who are the idiots who came up with this?" I attended my first NCWM meeting in 1994 in San Diego, catching my first glimpse of the incredible detail that was debated, the opposing views and opinions that were offered, and the dedication and passion of the stakeholders involved. That meeting quickly changed my opinions regarding any involvement of "idiocy" and opened my eyes to the many factors and considerations that go into developing such standards.

We here, engaged in the work of the Conference and in our duties and activities back home, readily recognize the importance of what we do. That's what keeps us involved, keeps us striving to meet our motto, "That Equity May Prevail." As a national standard-setting body, the work and focus of NCWM has undergone incredible changes and addressed an ever-widening array of challenges. We have continually stepped up to meet those challenges.

As we have all witnessed in these challenging times, many are facing cutbacks, reductions, hiring freezes, and the like. Again, all of us here fully recognize the importance of what



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we do. It is evidenced by the fact that we are at this conference, have struggled to justify the expense, to take the time from the workloads that await us back at our offices, to study the issues and present our views. However, neither the public nor our state or local government leaders know enough of what we do, why we do it, and why it is so critical to the marketplaces, the consumers, and the competing businesses and manufacturers that we devote ourselves to protecting.

With that realization, the theme I have chosen for the coming year is: "Taking Measure of Our Worth."

This conference has tackled so many issues through just the years that I have witnessed:

As fuel dispensers and scales evolved from mechanical to electronic systems, security seals evolved from lead and wire devices to audit trails....

- Yet, how many have the time and resources to regularly access and review audit trails?

As price scanners grew in use, we developed the Examination Procedure for Price Verification...

- But, how many jurisdictions have funding to routinely perform scanner inspections?

We've developed standards and test procedures for Multiple Dimension Measuring Devices...

- But, how many have been able to secure the funds to acquire test standards?

We've continually revised Handbook 133 and remain struggling to address moisture loss...

- Yet, how many jurisdictions daily, weekly, or monthly conduct package inspections?

Now, we are witnessing the introduction of hydrogen fuel to the marketplace and have adopted a tentative code for testing dispensers with calibrated transfer standards...

- How many will have resources to acquire the test equipment?...To absorb the workload?

NCWM recently adopted revisions to tolerances and test procedures for water submeters. As I stand here, in spite of strong efforts to defeat it, a bill is steadily proceeding through California's Legislature to exempt water submeters from inspection by Weights and Measures officials.

- One of the principal claims and arguments of the proponents?

- "Manufacturers do not face such regulation in most, if any, of the other 49 states."

In many cases, resource limitations and resulting forced prioritization of only select duties prevent many of us from undertaking these and other regulatory activities.

This body does great work, important work, and has done so for over 100 years. Together with



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our associate members, industry partners, and many stakeholders, we work diligently and passionately to develop appropriate, meaningful, effective standards and procedures for the benefit of all in the marketplace. But, if we don't have the resources to implement those procedures, to enforce the standards, and to monitor compliance in the marketplace, all the standards in the world have little meaning and limited impact. We need to do a better job in explaining our worth and that of the work that we do.

All of us are pressed for time. No one wants more surveys to complete or data to process and report. But, as we address more emerging technologies, develop more and more standards, adopt ever more detailed procedures, we need to work together to ensure that we can carry them out, apply and enforce them in the field, and ensure the very uniformity that is NCWM's goal.

We need to tell our story – demonstrate the need – arm our legislators with the understanding and ammunition to go to battle for us and secure the resources to sustain and enhance our work. We debate for hours over why certain requirements, tests, and standards are critical. But, few outside of those debates and discussions ever hear – ever have cause to know – why it's all so important.

As regulatory officials, manufacturers, and retailers, our members measure a lot of commodities. We concern ourselves with how those commodities are marketed, ensuring accuracy in measurement and in providing sufficient information to facilitate value comparison.

The services that we provide to consumers, businesses, and device manufacturers, alike, are commodities...that must be marketed... that have a cost...that deserve to be invested in.

"That Equity May Prevail"..... It is not prevailing in state budgets. It is not prevailing in the minds of our elected leaders. In this economy, it certainly should be prevailing in the minds of consumers and business operators. We need to provide the information for value comparison – comparing our value to that of our states' health service programs, law enforcement services, all the competing interests – to be in the minds of the key decision makers whose assistance and support we need in enhancing our programs. I look forward to working together and seeking your assistance in taking measure of our worth and advertising why we are worth investing in.

I hope that, as your Chairman over the next year, I can help in coordinating efforts to market ourselves, to tell our story, to compile the best of what many of you may have already developed, and to seek additional information to advertise our worth and that of our programs to the marketplace we serve and protect. "Taking Measure of Our Worth:" Let's work



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together!

In the spirit of working together, let's acknowledge all those who have taken an active role in serving on the many committees, task forces, and work groups to accomplish the goals of this conference. To all of you, thank you.

In moving forward, I have a number of appointments to make, with acknowledgment that some additional appointments have yet to be finalized and I will be making those announcements soon.

- Laws and Regulations Committee:
  - To Be Later Announced: One appointment for a one-year term
  - Replacing John Gaccione, who has been appointed to the Board of Directors
  - Richard Lewis (Georgia) [5-year]
- Specifications and Tolerances Committee: To Be Later Announced [5-year]
- Professional Development Committee:
  - Kristin Macey (California) [5-year]
- Nominating Committee
  - Chair: Tim Tyson, Kansas
  - Judy Cardin, Wisconsin
  - Charles Carroll, Massachusetts
  - Thomas Geiler, Barnstable Regulatory Services, Massachusetts
  - Joe Gomez, New Mexico
  - Maxwell Gray, Florida
  - Randy Jennings, Tennessee
- Credentials Committee: To Be Later Announced
- Presiding Officers:
  - Mike Boitano, Amador County, CA
  - To Be Later Announced (Three additional appointments)
- Parliamentarian:
  - Lou Straub, Fairbanks Scales, Inc.
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- Chaplain:
  - Stephen Langford, Cardinal Scale Manufacturing Company



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- Seargents At Arms:  
Will be working with our host of the 2012 Annual to designate Seargents At Arms

Again, it is truly my honor and privilege to serve as your NCWM Chairman this year. I look forward to working with Chairman-Elect Stephen Benjamin and all of you in continuing, promoting, and measuring the value of the important work of the National Conference on Weights and Measures.