

# Area lawyer to lead national association

Patrick Costello to serve as

President of American

Agricultural Law Association

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LAKEFIELD – At its annual meeting one week ago today in Nashville, Tenn., the American Agricultural Law Association (AALA) announced its members has elected Patrick Costello, a Lakefield attorney, as president of the organization for 2013-2014.

Costello, a partner in the law firm of Costello, Carlson & Butzon, LLP, will lead the organization as president-elect and president for the next two years. He is a past director of the AALA. With a membership of more than 900 attorneys, economists and members of academia, the AALA is the only national professional organization focusing on legal needs of the agricultural community.

As president, Costello will preside over the 9 member board of directors and promote the association.

Costello said the AALA is well respected, and its role has taken on greater importance due to the issues reshaping agriculture and the impending technological advances which will equally change agriculture.

“Most of our work deals with legal issues facing farmers, ranchers and agribusiness – consumer issues, food safety, animal welfare and environmental issues.” Costello said, The American Agricultural Law Association is a great source of information about farm programs, taxes, financing, insurance, conservation, energy, sustainability and the regulation of all aspects of agriculture.

“There is great diversity in the membership. Professors from the Land Grant universities make up a rather large percentage of the members and we have lawyers in private practice, government officials from departments of agriculture and attorney generals, as well as agribusinesses in-house lawyers,” he added.

As president-elect, Costello will plan the AALA’s 34 annual educational symposium next year in Madison, Wis. Of the nearly 30 educational sessions he has to organize for the two-day event, Costello made initial contacts with nearly 15 possible speakers while at the annual meeting in Nashville.

The symposium alternates between the Midwest and the coasts, and Costello is thankful it will be as close as Wisconsin in 2013. Having attended 32 consecutive AALA conferences, he said he will draw on his network of experts to provide the type of high quality education programs attendees expect.

“We are looking to understand on a deeper level the way laws affect the producers who supply the food, fiber and fuel that is vital to our national interests,” said.

Among the top issues currently grabbing the attention of agriculture law are animal welfare and who's going to write the restrictions on antibiotics, Costello said, adding that both "are going to force some change in the way that we do things."

The AALA will offer an independent forum for investigation of innovative and workable solutions to those and other complex agricultural law problems.

Costello, a Lakefield native, returned to southwest Minnesota in 1977 to join Costello, Carlson & Butzon, LLP which has offices in Jackson, Lakefield and Heron Lake. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Hamline University and has his law degree from Creighton University School of Law.

It was while studying at Creighton that Costello enrolled in a course on agricultural law taught by a retired dean.

'Finding out there was an area of law that was about agricultural issues was pretty interesting to me,' he said.

While Costello's professional affiliation is in agricultural law, working in a rural practice has given him exposure to many different areas of law.

"Succession planning and taxation are what I know the most about – my reputation is as a probate lawyer working with estate and gift taxation," he said.

In addition to work in his law firm and involvement with the AALA, Costello is also active in the Minnesota State Bar Association, having served twice on its Board of Governors.