Director Candidates: Region 3 – Ill. (4-year term), Candidate 1 of 2

Donald 'Don' Carley
58 years old
103 Linden Lane, Springfield, Ill.
Farm Credit Member since: 2010

Family: Married to Patricia. Children are Kathryn, Lauren, Sarah and Claire

Brief description of agricultural operation and employment/business experience for the past five years: Carley Family Farms is our family-owned agricultural operation, which began with the purchase of a 60-acre farm in Adams County in 2009. Our farm now spans approximately 1,300 acres in Adams, Brown, Christian and Sangamon counties in Illinois, where we grow corn and soybeans. We also maintain a 2,250-acre cattle ranch in southeastern Colorado and recently expanded into cattle production.

In addition to farming, I serve as an Executive Vice President, Chief Administrative Officer and General Counsel of Horace Mann Educators Corporation, a publicly traded insurance and financial services company serving educators and others who serve the community. In my role, I oversee the company's human resources, communications, legal, compliance and administrative (facilities) teams across the country.

Boards or committees you currently serve on and boards or committees you have served on in the past 5 years (please include the principal business of any board listed, e.g., "local school board" or "agricultural supply co-op" etc.): Throughout my career, I have served on numerous nonprofit boards. Currently, I serve in two key roles:

- Member of the Rochester School Board, supporting our local schools.
- As Corporate Secretary for Horace Mann, I work closely with the Board of Directors on governance, compliance and strategic oversight matters.

Community involvement/government service: My wife, Patricia, and I are raising our four daughters in Rochester, Illinois. Over the past five years, our focus has been on our family and remaining actively engaged in our local community. My service on the Rochester School Board reflects my commitment to education and civic involvement. I also actively support economic development through engagement with local businesses, town leaders and community organizations.

Education:

- William & Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia (BS)
- Temple Law School, Philadelphia (JD)
- University of Chicago, Chicago (MBA)

What is your vision for the future of agriculture? As a farmer, I believe the future of Midwest agriculture will be rooted in the values that have sustained family farms for generations while embracing new technologies that improve productivity and stewardship. Farmers will increasingly rely on precision agriculture tools, drones, sensors and artificial intelligence to increase yields while reducing waste and environmental impact.

There is also a growing focus on regenerative practices such as crop rotation, cover crops and reduced tillage to protect soil health and conserve resources for future generations. Automation — from self-driving tractors to robotic harvesters — will help address labor pressures and improve efficiency. New crop varieties will also help farms adapt to unpredictable weather and changing climates.

These advancements will require capital investment, increased risk-taking and additional training. The need for agriculture-focused financial institutions will be critical in helping farmers evolve and thrive.

What do you believe are the primary issues facing agriculture and Compeer Financial? Today's farmers face significant economic and operational challenges, including volatility in commodity markets, severe and unpredictable weather, soaring input costs and tightening credit conditions. Land values have risen dramatically, and higher borrowing costs make it harder for new farmers to get started or for existing operations to expand.

For Compeer Financial, larger and more complex farm operations bring greater risk, especially in a down market. Additionally, a shrinking base of new farmers presents long-term sustainability concerns.

Compeer Financial must continue to evolve and innovate to meet these challenges head-on, ensuring its services remain vital to farmers now and in the future. Its support for rural communities is also critical to ensuring the infrastructure exists to support farming operations. In addition, its risk management tools will need to evolve to address current and emerging risks.

Why do you want to serve on the Board of Directors at Compeer Financial? It would be an honor to serve on Compeer Financial's board. One of my favorite items in our home is a milk can from my great-grandfather's dairy farm — a simple reminder of the legacy and values that shaped me. Some of my earliest memories are hunting and fishing with my grandfather, father and brother, all of whom shared my love of agriculture and rural life.

My grandfather served as the head of 4-H in New York state, and my father, a plant pathologist, helped develop agricultural chemicals still in use today.

I want to ensure the next generation can build a life in agriculture — raising their families, stewarding the land, and watching the sun rise and set over their own farms.

If elected, I would work to ensure Compeer Financial continues delivering exceptional service to its members by helping today's farmers grow and adapt while helping tomorrow's farmers get started. I am especially passionate about supporting generational transitions and breaking down barriers for young or first-time farmers.