

## 2011 AFBF State Farm Bureau Awards Program

**State Name: Ohio**

**Program Area: Policy Implementation**

### **Member Involvement:**

Ohio Farm Bureau Federation's (OFBF) national, state and local public policy efforts are rooted in all 87 county Farm Bureaus. Every county president, public policy action team, policy development committee, and advisory team participant are part of grassroots programming. Beginning with county policy development, input on key issues is gathered from the 479 statewide advisory councils and from county boards, advisory teams, young farmers and community leaders. County policy development committees host policy drafting meetings in the process of proposing county, state and national policy and over 157 members attended seven statewide issue advisory team meetings designed to gather policy suggestions. These issues and policy suggestions are reported to the OFBF Board of Trustees and the state policy development committee. The state policy development committee reviews the proposals from all sources in making its recommendations to the delegate body at the state annual meeting. Coordination for all of these activities rests with the board of trustees and its public policy committee, with the state public policy staff ensuring alignment with mission, other departments, external stakeholders and communications.

In each county, a public policy action team is appointed by the county president. Each action team establishes a grassroots action network for generating multiple contacts ongoing and when needed. Training on public policy issues begins at OFBF's statewide two-day Leadership Conference where more than 50 public policy action team leaders (materials distributed to all others) were trained to develop and implement county activities that result in policy development, policy implementation and political action. Training continues with the "Ag Day at the Capitol" (over 400 participants), regional cabinet meetings and a training session for OFBF's 27 organization directors and supervisors. OFBF also had 13 members representing Ohio on AFBF's 2011 Commodity Advisory Committees.



### **Communications:**

The goals and objectives of the public policy program are communicated to county leaders via the POWER Communication program (Internet and direct e-mail), meetings with organization directors, and regional public policy training meetings. These communications and meetings include discussions relative to county goals, program development and implementation. Objectives are further reinforced through the goals set in the County Farm Bureau Achievement Award and County Incentive Programs, where counties receive financial rewards dependent upon the number of goals accomplished. Communication of program goals with organization staff takes place during the annual statewide training session, interaction at the monthly regional training meetings, and one-on-one and teleconference meetings. Background information is regularly provided to county leaders and organization directors during the year through publications, a website (and links), regular POWER Communication updates and individual meetings. Progress toward goal advancement and implementation is monitored by regular progress reports to the appropriate OFBF board committees and is reported on regularly through the "On Your Behalf" column in *Buckeye Farm News* - OFBF's member newspaper.

### **Planning/Goals:**

Public policy programming is guided by the organization's vision (updated in our 2009 *Envisioned Future* document) to "forge a partnership between farmers and consumers that meets

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consumer needs, addresses public expectations and ensures agricultural prosperity in a global marketplace.” Contained in the *Envisioned Future* are a series of indicators of success. Success is measured by progress toward these indicators. *Envisioned Future* guides the policy development process and the setting of state legislative and regulatory priorities. State policy resolutions and national policy recommendations are established by a majority vote of the 341 county delegates at the OFBF annual meeting. The OFBF Board of Trustees’ public policy committee and staff establish state policy priorities, which are approved by the state board of trustees. While working with established core policies and keeping an eye on the *Envisioned Future* and its indicators of success, the OFBF board public policy committee and ultimately the full board set the key result areas that define the scope of work for the coming year. Key result areas for the 2010-2011 program year were: Advance Farm Bureau policy to create a positive jobs climate, protect personal property rights, and encourage member involvement by developing a volunteer-friendly Farm Bureau. The national legislative/regulatory priorities included: farm policy, regulation relief, international trade and political involvement. Key state priorities included state budget, regulatory reform, energy development, business climate and taxes, protecting private property and developing new legal tools and services. Program strategies planned for the past year to accomplish the national and state priorities are explained in detail in the following sections.



### **Improvement over previous year:**

Each year OFBF leadership challenges staff, volunteers, leaders and members to improve programming over previous performance, 2011 was no exception. This year our seven issue advisory team meetings were held separately around the state, allowing each group a full day to focus on policy review, discussion and development in the areas of Livestock, Dairy, Rural Development, Equine, Natural Resources, Feed Grains, Specialty Crop and Labor. As a result, the volunteer committee members were able to spend more time discussing key issues important to their committees and were able to develop more quality policy proposals.

A very successful major campaign was undertaken to grow contributions to our political action committee known as Agriculture for Good Government Political Action Committee or AGGPAC. This campaign took several forms as counties were asked to increase their voluntary contribution level and new promotion and solicitation material for AGGPAC was developed and circulated as part membership mailings. The efforts resulted in both increased direct voluntary contributions and the vast majority of our county Farm Bureaus voting to raise their voluntary contribution levels. Additional program improvements are discussed in detail in the Presidents Awards Section of this application.

### **Results:**

OFBF conducted both key contact and mass contact activities on a series of important legislative and regulatory issues in the 2011 program year resulting in an outstanding series of policy achievements. OFBF staff and/or farmer leaders testified on dozens of bills with many of them being signed into law, including measures that: Eliminated Ohio’s estate tax, Expanded Ohio’s agricultural sales tax exemption; Protected livestock producers by ensuring that farmers will no longer face criminal charges if animals escape their enclosure through no fault of the owner; Maintained Ohio’s strong livestock environmental permitting program; Corrected a new law that would have eliminated auction options for farm equipment; Promoted agriculture’s importance by designating the an Ohio Agriculture Week; Eliminated late registration fees on seasonal and farm vehicles; Expanded the definition of farm commodities and truck weight variances; and in a year of incredible state budget

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challenges, OFBF secured numerous state budget victories.



OFBF demonstrated our continued support for strong federal involvement by exposing key farmers, county presidents and young leaders to the inner workings of Washington, D.C. by hosting multiple group educational trips to our nation's capital. Over 100 volunteers leaders and staff participated in OFBF's 65th Annual County Presidents Trip. A dozen statewide media representatives, whom OFBF sponsors and brings on the trip, witnessed Farm Bureau in action during this trip and reported the events. The annual OFBF Young Agricultural Professionals Trip included 30 selected young leaders and staff who participated in the leadership development activity. In addition, 20 AgriPOWER Institute participants traveled to Washington, D.C. as part of their external learning experience. The AgriPOWER Institute is OFBF's intensive yearlong leadership/public policy advocacy program now in its fourth year. These groups had the opportunity to interact with AFBF staff, the House Republican Leader and other key Congressional leadership, meet top officials in the USDA, U.S. EPA, and The White House, and visit Capitol Hill and several embassies.

OFBF continued our engagement in national issues by working with The Ohio State University to sponsor the sixth annual Scarlet and Grey Congressional Breakfast on Capitol Hill with over 450 in attendance. OFBF staff and volunteers attended AFBF's Environmental Issues Conference, Public Policy Conference, and Annual Resolutions Meeting and made nine (9) additional trips to Washington, D.C. to meet directly with policy makers on our priority issues. OFBF also launched our own action request in support of the Free Trade Agreements which included educational videos related the importance of trade to Ohio. OFBF engaged in a series of federal regulatory issues this past year including filing comments on proposed transportation rules, air quality standards, food safety initiatives, water permitting, pesticides issues and more. We also successfully helped secure the lead sponsors (Reps. Schmidt and Gibbs of Ohio) for HR 872, which eliminates duplicative regulation of pesticides.

The OFBF agricultural law information team handled over 2,000 legal inquiries in the 2011 program year ranging from drainage and fencing issues to health codes and zoning requirements. These efforts led to legal memoranda, field visits, additional consultation, and amicus curiae brief filing. OFBF staff also participated in AFBF's Legal Information & Networking Committee (LINC) and are in the process of creating a new legal foundation, the Ohio Ag Law Center. The first board meeting was held and progress is being made to establish policies and procedures for the Center.

OFBF organized or sponsored numerous fundraising and meet-and-greet events for Ohio legislators this program year, many held on member farms. These events were attended by Farm Bureau members and staff and included representatives from Ohio's commodity organizations. Ohio Farm Bureau leaders conducted candidate screenings and designated our "Friends of Agriculture." OFBF was actively engaged with all statewide campaigns last fall, with staff traveling more than 1,000 miles in two days to distribute more than 12,000 campaign yard signs for members use. Get-out-the-vote campaign activities stem from our "Farm Votes Matter" theme which is promoted through social media, *Buckeye Farm News* Election Guide, OFBF.org website, the website [www.farmvotesmatter.org](http://www.farmvotesmatter.org) and at events. OFBF's work was further enhanced via OFBF's AGGPAC which raised and distributed over \$300,000 this past election cycle to both state and federal candidates. OFBF and AFBF staff also provided special training to interested individuals at a Campaign Management Seminar for Candidates.



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### The President's Award

Ohio's estate tax is dead! For more than 25 years OFBF and our members have explained the unfairness of this tax and that it was an impediment to passing the farm on to the next generation. Despite facing major political and budget challenges in the state this year, OFBF was able to successfully pass legislation that will eliminate Ohio's estate tax on January 1, 2013. A key innovation for the Ohio Farm Bureau this program year was the enhanced grassroots support effort related to speaking out and standing up for the elimination of Ohio's estate tax. In a major show of political force and support for eliminating the tax, OFBF organized a rally on the Ohio State House lawn in downtown Columbus as a way to expand our already successful "Ag Day at the Capital" event. Over 400 Farm Bureau members took part in the event waving signs and cheering as elected officials took the stage to speak to the rally. This major event was viewed as the watershed activity that allowed for the General Assembly to vote for eliminating the burdensome tax. This landmark action resulted from the hard work of OFBF staff, members and political leaders in the state to whom we provided major resources and support. This achievement was the culmination of sound goal setting, solid policy development work, communication and strong policy advocacy from OFBF staff and members.



Another key innovation was the detailed and consistent work of our new Center for Food and Animal Issues (CAFI) team and attorneys as they guided our new Livestock Care Board through the creation of livestock care standards. As a result of last year's livestock agreement and the passage of State Issue 2, OFBF's CAFI team engaged with commodity groups, state government and other interest parties to complete work on the creation of Ohio livestock care rules. Over 90 meetings were held throughout the state in 2010 and 2011 by the care board with OFBF staff and volunteer members participating in all of them. These activities resulted in the development and completion of workable livestock care standards that will allow the Ohio livestock industry to improve and grow. This model is being lifted up in the state by the media and political leaders as the "right-way" to address difficult state policy issues.

The 2011 program year in Ohio has also seen major activity in the area of property rights and energy development. With the identification of certain types of ideal geological formations in Ohio for new energy exploration, OFBF staff and members working with state government organized dozens of workshops which were held across the state with literally thousands of people in attendance. These innovative meetings focused on educating Farm Bureau members, the public, local and state government, and other interested parties on farmland contracts (from formation and negotiation through enforcement) principally for oil and gas leases, but also wind energy agreements, timber contracts, production contracts, and other related issues. These briefings also advised members on working with effective legal counsel, incorporating special provisions to protect farm infrastructure and resources, as well as structuring rental and royalty payments to lessen tax and increase financial benefit over several generations. OFBF work helped our members gain access to legal counsel and negotiate effective energy exploration, wind and pipeline legal agreements, protecting farm infrastructure and natural resources. Additional innovative energy activities took place in the Buckeye state with OFBF's involvement. These included 12 wind projects; county Farm Bureaus working with several companies to evaluate feed stocks and energy crops for solid, liquid and gaseous biofuel projects; and specifically county Farm Bureaus working with Aloterra Energy to create the first biomass energy crop collaborative approved for USDA's Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP) in the eastern United States.