SPEAK OUT

March 2009

Policy Development

Objectives

- To identify important issues relating to agriculture on a county, state and national level
- To encourage council members to discuss and submit policy proposals
- To encourage council members to become involved with and remain a part of the policy process.

Farm Bureau & Policy Development

The discussion on which you are about to embark will play a major role in what Farm Bureau will do beyond 2009. Policy suggestions from councils surface important issues and recommend possible solutions. Policy development is one of the best means to assure that grassroots input from our members is addressed.

Policy for the county Farm Bureau is the foundation for programs and activities of the county Farm Bureau. The policy development program should give opportunity for Farm Bureau members to shape policies that give direction for the following year of effort. Your county Farm Bureau policy development committee should study in-depth the problems of the county and of agriculture. David White, OFBF senior director of policy development and Research reminds us not to "underestimate the importance and potential of Ohio Farm Bureau's grassroots policy development process."

Advisory Councils are a grassroots forum in which you can be heard and make your voice count. Your suggestions into this process will occur at this meeting. Farm Bureau depends on you as Advisory Council members to surface important issues and suggest solutions to help direct the future of agriculture.

Other sources of Farm Bureau policy suggestions include individual members, county Farm Bureau policy development committees, the county Farm Bureau board and meetings with outside resource persons or organizations. Advisory Councils represent perhaps the single largest source of policy suggestions in the process. Council suggestions received from this guide will be forwarded to your county Farm Bureau for consideration in its policy development process.

A Proud Policy Legacy

The policy process has been in place since Farm Bureau's early days, and it has become so ingrained that it is easy to take for granted what an effective – and unique – process it is. Back in 1950, *Farm Journal* took note of Ohio's Advisory Council system in an article by Vernon Vine. He noted, "The remarkable thing that's happening is that neighbors are getting together in small groups to talk things over…. remarkable that one day they might

tell the president of the United States, right in the White House, what they think of some of his schemes… and maybe the next day they are getting the township committee to fix the bridge a cow fell through. Councils are helping to keep alive the neighborhood spirit."

But simply stating an opinion does not necessarily make good policy, or more specifically, well written policy with a stated goal. When your council secretary records your suggestions, make sure he or she is writing it in a way that clearly states the problem and a possible solution. For example, simply stating that roads and bridges need to be fixed is poorly written policy. A better way would be to say, for example, "We encourage the county to dedicate a larger portion of the county revenue to the maintenance of roads and bridges." Well written policy strikes a balance between stating a specific goal but not dictating a narrow solution that may tie the hands of those who will work to make the policy a reality.

Another important thing for your council to consider is if your suggestion is really something Farm Bureau can – or should be expected to – accomplish. First, ask if this problem directly affects agriculture and is something Farm Bureau should pursue. Second, is the proposal forward-looking? In other words, will it affect something in the future that can result in some form of action? Also ask yourself if the problem is something Farm Bureau can actively address. You should be able to answer "yes" to all of these questions. The proposals that you are submitting are destined for your county policy development committee for review and discussion. If the committee prioritizes your policy, then it will be forwarded to your county annual meeting to be voted on by local Farm Bureau members. Ultimately your policy could eventually make its way to the Ohio Farm Bureau annual meeting later this year and the American Farm Bureau annual meeting next January.

Finally, consider how your policy suggestion relates to Farm Bureau's vision statement: Forging a partnership between farmers and consumers that meets consumer needs and ensures agricultural prosperity in a global marketplace. Ask if your policy suggestions move us closer to our shared vision for the future.

Creating Policy

For most of you, the policy development process is not new. For some, this may be the first time you have submitted policy. Let's take a look at the policy process. First, your council submits your proposals along with your council minutes to the Ohio Farm Bureau office in Columbus. The proposals are previewed, sorted by counties and mailed to the county Farm Bureau office. The proposals are presented to the county policy development committee for further review. The county committee then determines what will be presented to the voting members at your county Farm Bureau annual meeting. The process is then repeated at the state and national levels.

Listed below are some things to keep in mind as you draft policy suggestions. Also included are a few policy comparisons.

Criteria for good policy

- Does it directly affect agriculture?
- Does it ask for or will it result in action?
- Is it forward-looking?
- Is it of high interest to members?
- Should it be done by Farm Bureau?
- Does the Advisory Council believe the policy is needed?

What should be written?

- State the problem.
- What is the result expected?
- Is it general enough to give latitude for execution?
- Is it specific enough to establish a clear goal?

Here are a few policies that have been submitted in the past. Can you see the difference in the quality of the statements?

Local

- We encourage more being to done to support Farmland Preservation.

- We support the creation, development and implementation of a comprehensive, countywide land use plan.

State

- We support the reduction of all wildlife species in Ohio.

- We support a lengthening of the hunting season for deer in order to reduce the size of the herds in Ohio. We also support an increase in the number of deer that would be permitted by each hunter.

National

- We support the preservation of farmland.

- We encourage the reauthorization of the USDA Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program in the Rural Development title of the next farm bill.

As you can see, the first policy at each level tends to be vague. The second policy listed at each level provides a specific action to be taken, yet leaves the process for accomplishment open. This provides Ohio Farm Bureau with the flexibility that is sometimes needed to help craft legislation or write the rules to accomplish the policies' intent.

Now is your opportunity to tell us the direction Ohio Farm Bureau should be moving. Use this opportunity wisely, discuss among yourselves and be sure to write your policies in the proper format. We look forward to hearing from you!

Questions:

In the spaces provided, please list any county, Ohio and/or American Farm Bureau policy that your council wishes to have submitted to your county policy development committee. If more room is needed, use standard notebook or printer paper to attach it to your minutes.

1. County Farm Bureau policy:

2. Ohio Farm Bureau policy:

3. American Farm Bureau policy:

April Topic: Identity Theft

Officer Selections: April is the month you are asked to select a chair, discussion leader, secretary, promotion & education representative and Public Policy representative. Think about the council role that you want to take in the upcoming program year. 2009 – 2010 rosters will be sent in your next packet.

Information Sources:

David White, senior director of policy development & research

Ohio Farm Bureau Policy Development Manual

Ohio Farm Bureau Web site – http://www.ofbf.org

OFBF Policy Development Council Guides (1999 – 2008)

CONNECTIONS

COMPARE YOUR RESPONSES

The following is a tabulation of the responses to the November Speakout Guide on the issue of *Membership Marketing.* Samplings of some of the comments received are also included.

1. **What groups in your county can you encourage to join Farm Bureau?**

Comments
There were many great suggestions, a few are listed below.

- Any group who serves agricultural customers
- Tack shops (equine industry)
- Farm employees & hobby farmers
- Bob Evans employees
- Fairboard, 4-H leaders, tractor clubs, garden clubs, etc.
- Hunters
- FFA members

2. **At what events can you include a membership component?**

Comments

- Farmers' markets
- Commodity festivals (i.e. pumpkin festival, etc.)
- Food events (i.e. rib fest)
- Farm Bureau day at the zoo or other local entertainment venues

3. **How can we encourage more volunteers to participate in membership?**

Comments

- Promote issues that interest people
- Utilize our youth (4-H, FFA, etc.)
- Give scholarship funds to college age members for signing new members
- Sponsor community events
- Flyers in rural mailboxes or newspapers

4. **Are you interested in participating in membership? Do you know others who could help out? Please share names of potential membership volunteers?**

Comments

Thank you for all the suggestions you sent in to the Ohio Farm Bureau office.

PUBLIC POLICY

Earth Day

Coming up in April are two opportunities for Farm Bureau members to put agriculture in a positive light. Earth Day, Wednesday, April 22 and Arbor Day, Friday, April 24, 2009 provide opportunities for all of us to confirm our commitment to protecting our environment. Our individual actions, from recycling a soda can to planting a tree to cleaning up a local stream, do make a difference. These two days provide Ohio agriculture the opportunity to highlight the positive impact agriculture has on the environment and highlight those individuals (Environmental Stewardship and Conservation Farm Family Award winners) in your community who embody the characteristics of environmental stewards.

Trends & Issues Conference

Consider attending this year's conference which will be held Thursday, March 26 at the Fawcett Center in Columbus. Highlights include Dr. Carl Zulauf speaking on the farm bill and Dr. Garth Boyd speaking on Climate Change. Contact your county Farm Bureau office for more details.

COMMUNICATIONS

Help spread the word about *Our Ohio's* new *Teacher's Lounge* newsletter!

Relevant to any grade level and distributed via e-mail once every two months, the new *Teacher's Lounge* newsletter offers resources available to teachers from Ohio Farm Bureau and other related groups to help incorporate agriculture in the classroom. A version of the newsletter appears in each issue of *Our Ohio* magazine and PDF versions can be downloaded at OurOhio.org by clicking on "Food and Families," and "Teacher's Lounge." Print copies may also be ordered through county Farm Bureau offices. To suggest content or add e-mail addresses to the distribution list, e-mail Judy Roush at jroush@ofbf.org or call 614-246-2743.

Be sure to catch Ohio Farm Bureau and *Our Ohio* at the following events:

March 14 - Small Farm Conference
8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Wilmington College – Wilmington

March 20-22 - Beef Expo
Ohio Expo Center – Columbus

ORGANIZATION

Foundation Offers Education Programs on Personal Philanthropy

Many families interested in being involved in philanthropy are discovering that you don't need a large fortune to positively impact people's lives; all you need is interest and a workable plan. The *Ohio Farm Bureau Foundation Bequest Society* is helping families create their vital, first step to establish a lifetime gift giving strategy.

Farm Bureau members can discover more about establishing a plan that offers personal control and can be changed easily as family situations and lifestyles change. The program can be conducted with one family, or as part of an advisory council meeting. Contact Dale Arnold at the Ohio Farm Bureau Foundation, phone – 614.246.8294 or e-mail – darnold@ofbf.org, for more information.

HONEYBAKED WINNER

Council #20
Licking County

OHIO FARM BUREAU

PUBLIC POLICY DEPARTMENT • OHIO FARM BUREAU FEDERATION, INC.
280 N. High St. • P.O. Box 182383 • Columbus, Ohio 43218-2383
614-246-8265 • FAX 614-249-2200 • E-mail: speakout@ofbf.org
Prepared by Chris Henney, OFBF director of policy development

PRINTED WITH SOY INK
Trademark of American Soybean Association

Discussion Leader's Notes
March 2009

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

POLICY DEVELOPMENT DVD
Please note the supplemental DVD in your packet this month. Consider showing this brief and entertaining overview of the OFBF policy development process this month.

ENVISIONED FUTURE PROJECT
Ohio Farm Bureau is once again embarking on a journey to discover what might lie ahead for the organization. The Envisioned Future New Era task force has convened and will be creating a picture of Ohio Farm Bureau's future. You have a chance to provide input to this process. Please discuss and complete the enclosed survey.

TIPS FOR LEADING THIS MONTH'S DISCUSSION

- Encourage members to discuss Farm Bureau policy issues. Specifically, think about new ideas that would be beneficial to agriculture and the rural community.
- Consider updating existing policies that have become outdated and eliminating policies that are no longer relevant.
- Encourage suggestions that are concise and provide a clear position. Try to avoid making general statements that lack a direct action.
- Encourage suggestions that relate to county, state and federal policy.

CONNECTIONS

Public Policy
2009 Trends & Issues Conference, Earth Day & Arbor Day

Communications
Help spread the word about *Our Ohio's* new *Teacher's Lounge* newsletter!

Organization
Foundation Offers Education Programs on Personal Philanthropy

HONEYBAKED HAM WINNER

Council #20
Licking County

FUN SHEET

SUBMITTED BY: LICKSKILLET HUSTLERS
MERCER COUNTY

Most people know the nicknames of their own hometown, but how many of these 20 cities can you identify from their nickname?

Clue:

1. Beantown	1. Boston
2. Big Apple	2. New York City
3. Birthplace of American Liberty	3. Concord
4. Chocolatetown, USA	4. Hershey
5. City of Brotherly Love	5. Philadelphia
6. Golden Gate City	6. San Francisco
7. Crescent City	7. New Orleans
8. Twin Cities	8. Minneapolis & St. Paul
9. Glass Capital of the World	9. Corning
10. Insurance City	10. Hartford
11. Magic City	11. Orlando
12. Mile High City	12. Denver
13. Music City	13. Nashville
14. Peanut City	14. Plains
15. Pretzel City	15. Hanover