Providing Opportunities for Youth on Farms

The U.S. Department of Labor withdrew the rule regarding youth farm labor standards that would have restricted many of the jobs that young people could perform on farms. OFBF members were instrumental in providing examples and stories of the importance of providing hands-on training and education for the next generation as they prepare to be the stewards of the land. Our work continues as we join with the FFA to provide needed input on how best to proceed with education to ensure the safety of youth on our farms.

Protecting Water Resources

Gov. John Kasich signed legislation (H.B. 473) sponsored by Rep. Lynn Wachtmann that outlines state regulations on water withdrawals, which was the final implementing measure to the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact. Ohio Farm Bureau had designated the legislation as a “Key Vote” and had advocated for balancing protection of the state’s water resources with farmers’ need to access water.

Managing Costs

Ohio Farm Bureau backed legislation expanding the Agricultural Linked Deposit program (Ag-LINK), which was passed by the House and Senate and was signed by the governor. The program provides low interest loans to help Ohio farmers offset costs associated with feed, seed, fertilizer and fuel.

Stopping Metal Theft

OFBF was a member of a metal theft task force that worked on updating Ohio’s metal theft laws through Senate Bill 193. The bill requires the director of the Department of Public Safety to develop and implement by Jan. 1, 2014, a secure database for use by law enforcement agencies regarding scrap metal and bulk merchandise container transactions. All dealers in Ohio will be required to register with the director to support the database. Finally, the bill calls for a task force to study the effectiveness of this piece of legislation.

CAUV Legal Victory

In August, the 11th District Court of Appeals ruled that wetland mitigation banks qualify as agriculture for purposes of the Ohio Constitution, and therefore qualify for CAUV under the statutory definition of land enrolled in a federal conservation program. Had the Ashtabula County auditor been successful in its appeal, the result could have disqualified from CAUV not only wetland mitigation banks, but also land enrolled in other important federal conservation programs such as CRP, WRP, EQIP and others. OFBF filed an amicus brief with the court to inform it about the history of the CAUV program in Ohio, the purpose and importance of CAUV and the importance of conservation practices and conservation programs. The brief also provided Ohio Farm Bureau’s member-developed policies relating to CAUV, which supports the inclusion of land using conservation practices and land enrolled in federal conservation programs in CAUV, and directs OFBF to protect CAUV in Ohio and to promote the integrity of the program by supporting the enforcement of its standards.

Live Racing Days Protected

The Ohio General Assembly sent House Bill 386 to the governor’s desk with provisions to ensure that Ohio’s horse racing industry can benefit from the new video lottery terminals to be installed at Ohio’s horse racing tracks. Funding for the breed fund and a mandatory number of live racing days were both kept in statute in the bill that will govern the state’s new gambling laws for casinos and VLT venues.

Wind Farm Legal Victory

In March 2012, the Supreme Court of Ohio
upheld an order issued by the Ohio Power Siting Board approving the application of Buckeye Wind LLC to construct and operate a large-scale wind farm in Champaign County. OFBF has been involved in this case from the beginning and filed an amicus brief with the Ohio Supreme Court urging the court to affirm the Ohio Power Siting Board’s order.

Clean Ohio & Farmland Preservation

OFBF served as an integral part of the coalition that helped to secure an appropriation for the Clean Ohio program, including $6 million for the Ag Easement Purchase Program and $36 million in Green Space funding. This funding is an appropriate balance of fiscal responsibility and funding for important programs that help to sustain Ohio’s farms and open spaces. Ohio Farm Bureau has been a longtime supporter of the Clean Ohio program, especially the Agricultural Easement Purchase Program, which has preserved more than 20,000 acres of prime agricultural lands here in Ohio. Sen. Chris Widener and Rep. Ron Amstutz were legislative champions of these programs.

Funding for Expo Center

OFBF supported a $1 million capital appropriation for the Ohio Expo Center. Investment in the Ohio Expositions Center will generate significant economic opportunity here in our state. The Expo Center is host to five of Columbus’ top 10 conventions and 156 annual events, including both the Ohio State Fair and the All American Quarter Horse Congress. Updating the Expo Center will help us to keep critical events like the Quarter Horse Congress continue the legacy of Ohio agricultural excellence and provide new opportunities.

Agricultural Deer

HB 389 transferred the authority over agricultural deer (deer being raised as livestock) from the Ohio Division of Wildlife to the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA). Agricultural deer are captive deer that are propagated as part of a herd, often for hunting purposes in preserves or in areas where the population has been decimated by disease such as chronic wasting disease. OFBF policy recognizes agricultural deer as livestock. As such, OFBF supported moving the regulation of these animals to ODA.

Voluntary Marketing Agreements

OFBF worked with Ohio Produce Growers and Marketers Association (OPGMA) to establish a new section of code for voluntary marketing agreements in Senate Bill 309. The legislation will allow farmers to join together to form voluntary marketing initiatives for products like fruits, vegetables and other agricultural commodities.